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JUST TO GET MARRIED

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A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By
CICELY HAMILTON

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JACK AND JILL AND A FRIEND. 6d.

A Comedy in One Act.

Samuel French, Limited.

JUST TO GET MARRIED

A Comedy in Three Acts, produced at the Little Theatre, London, on November 8, 1910, with the following cast : -

SIR THEODORE GRAYLE	<i>Thomas Sidney.</i>
LADY CATHERINE GRAYLE (His wife)	<i>Rosina Filippi.</i>
TOD GRAYLE (His son)	<i>Eccard Vandelp.</i>
BERTHA GRAYLE (His daughter)	<i>Dorothy Minto.</i>
GEORGIANA VICARY (Lady Catherine's niece)	<i>Gertrude Kingston.</i>
ADAM LANKESTER	<i>Godfrey Tearle.</i>
MRS. MACARTNEY	<i>Maud Cressall.</i>
FRANCES MELLISHIP	<i>Dora Barton.</i>
A FOOTMAN	<i>A. C. Fotheringham</i> <i>Lysens.</i>
DOBBINS (A railway porter)	<i>Arthur Fayne.</i>

SCENES

- THE FIRST ACT. *The drawing-room at Sir Theodore Grayle Country House.*
- THE SECOND ACT. *The Library.*
- THE THIRD ACT. *The General Waiting-room at Puckridge Railway Station.*

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JUST TO GET MARRIED

ACT I

SCENE.— *Drawing-room at SIR THEODORE GRAYLE'S country house.*

A plan of the scene is given at the end of the play.

TIME.— *It is after dinner.*

(As the curtain rises FRANCES MELLISHIP is sitting turning over an illustrated paper. MRS. MACARTNEY is at the piano - she rattles off the closing bars of a noisy tune, finishing with a bang.)

FRANCES. Thank you, Mrs. Macartney. *(Sitting on the sofa R.)*

MRS. MACARTNEY. Very charming of you to thank me. My performance seems to have driven everybody else out of the room. What has become of them?

FRANCES. Lady Catherine has gone to the library to write letters and Georgiana wandered off into the conservatory a few minutes ago.

MRS. MACARTNEY. With Mr. Lankester?

FRANCES. Oh, no. He is still in the dining-room.

MRS. MACARTNEY. I wonder does she ever talk to you, Miss Melliship?

FRANCES. Talk to me?

MRS. MACARTNEY. I mean about Mr. Lankester?

FRANCES. No.

MRS. MACARTNEY. I thought perhaps as you were

such old friends you were at school together, weren't you?

FRANCES. Oh, yes, we were—but *you* probably see a great deal more of her now than I do. When she's in London she looks me up at my studio now and again, but until last Saturday I hadn't seen her for nearly three months and she had never even mentioned Mr. Lankester to me.

MRS. MACARTNEY. I see.

FRANCES. How long has she known him?

MRS. MACARTNEY. Only quite a short time. (*She rises and leans on chair by table.*) She met him first when he was staying with the Collingbournes a few weeks ago.

FRANCES. Is that all?

MRS. MACARTNEY. That's all. I suppose Lady Catherine noticed that he seemed attentive, for she promptly invited him here—and here he has been for the last fortnight. Honestly, what do you think of him? (*Crosses to sofa.*)

FRANCES. I really don't know—he's so quiet. I can hardly ever get anything out of him.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Nobody can—except Georgie. I suppose he must talk to her when they're alone—otherwise he's too painfully shy to open his mouth. I feel quite sorry for him, poor thing—his ten years in the back-blocks of Canada—whatever they may be—seem to have deprived him of the power of speech, at any rate as far as women are concerned.

FRANCES. He's very good looking.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Good-looking, yes—but oh, how dull! However, that's Georgie's affair, not mine; and when once they are married she can take him in hand, polish him up and teach him not to be afraid of the sound of his own voice.

FRANCES. You think she does mean to marry him?

MRS. MACARTNEY. It seems to me that the question is—does he mean to marry her? I can see Lady

Catherine's getting a little restive, not to say worried. He's going away early to-morrow morning—and he and Georgie aren't engaged yet.

FRANCES. I should have thought there was no doubt——

MRS. MACARTNEY. Oh, so should I—in fact, every one thought so; but all the same he is going away to-morrow morning, and so far, we haven't been asked for our congratulations. I shall be awfully sorry for poor old Georgie if it doesn't come off—awfully sorry.

FRANCES. She cares for him then?

MRS. MACARTNEY (*with an amused shrug*). Oh, Georgie's a woman who ought to marry—and what's more, she is dying to marry, as any woman in her place should. Oh, I know you don't agree with that remark—but you're an artist with a vocation——

FRANCES. I wish I felt sure of that.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Anyhow, you're exceptional. Georgie isn't. And she does badly want to get married—badly. I should be very sorry for myself if I had to sit opposite to Mr. Adam Lankester at breakfast for the term of my natural life, but he may improve on acquaintance. And he's got enough to keep her—nearly three thousand a year, I believe.

FRANCES. Three thousand a year—what wealth!

MRS. MACARTNEY. He came into it unexpectedly, a few months ago—that was what brought him back to England. And Georgie literally hasn't a penny, you know; her father ran through everything and she has been absolutely dependent on the Grayles since she was a child.

FRANCES. Poor Georgie.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Not a nice position, of course. I should be very glad to see her settled, and so would Lady Catherine with two expensive sons and a daughter to provide for there won't be much over for Georgie the Grayles are fearfully hard up you know. I do hope, for all their sakes, that Mr. Lan-

kester is serious ; it will be so uncomfortable for poor Georgie if he isn't.

FRANCES (*ironically*). Only uncomfortable ?

MRS. MACARTNEY. Well, what I mean is that she has been encouraging him rather openly—every one round here has noticed it and is expecting the engagement to be announced. It will be rather dreadful for her if——

(*With sudden change of tone, as GEORGIANA VICARY enters door R. above sofa.*)

Let me see, it's to-morrow the Chesneys are coming to lunch, isn't it ?

FRANCES. The Chesneys ?

GEORGIANA (*behind sofa*). Not quite a success, Julia.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*astonished*). What ?

GEORGIANA. That sudden turn to the conversation. Frankie's face showed her amazement when the Chesneys were sprung upon her without the slightest warning.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*embarrassed*). What *do* you mean, Georgie ?

GEORGIANA (*comes round and sits on sofa between them*). Don't apologize. There was no need to drag in the Chesneys. Why shouldn't you talk about me as much as you like ? Well, (*looking from one to the other*), what conclusion did you arrive at ?

FRANCES. What conclusion ?

GEORGIANA. Yes, I'm dying to know. Please be quite candid and tell me what, in your opinion, is the state of Mr. Lankester's affections. Is he going to ask me to become Mrs. Lankester—or is he not ?

MRS. MACARTNEY (*laughing awkwardly*). My dear Georgie——

GEORGIANA. My dear Julia, that was what you were discussing a moment ago.

MRS. MACARTNEY. What an idea ! I assure you, I never——

GEORGIANA. Don't burden your soul with unnecessary lies, Julia. They are lies, aren't they, Frankie?

MRS. MACARTNEY. Georgie, it was most abominably mean of you to listen——

GEORGIANA. I didn't listen; I guessed right. Now, do tell me I should be so glad to know what you think. I'm entirely in the dark myself.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Georgie, how perfectly ridiculous you are.

GEORGIANA. I'm quite aware of that. I'm intensely ridiculous and I know it. But then the situation is ridiculous—painfully so.

FRANCES. What situation? What do you mean?

GEORGIANA. What situation—my dear good girl! Here am I waiting, day after day, to be proposed to and the man won't propose. Isn't that enough to make any woman feel a fool?

MRS. MACARTNEY. Really——

GEORGIANA (*coolly*). Yes, really, Julia. Don't pretend that you haven't summed up the situation—and discussed it with everybody in the house, except myself and Mr. Lankester. I've summed up the situation, too—summed it up to a T—and I don't see why I shouldn't also discuss it with you if I want to. (*She rises and goes to fire, looking into it.*) You needn't think that I don't know just as well as you do that the plain English of the whole business is that for the last fortnight I've been making myself rather cheap.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Georgie! (*She rises and puts hands on GEORGIANA'S shoulders.*)

GEORGIANA. Don't try and look shocked. I repeat, for the last fortnight I've been making myself remarkably cheap—so far without result. And for the last fortnight Aunt Catherine has been manoeuvring, beguiling, scheming to get me off her hands and on to Adam Lankester's—also without result. Mr. Lankester goes on in solid silence—looks at me, sits by me, walks with me, occasionally talks with

me and says nothing! (*She sits on settee below fire-place.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. Nothing? (*Leaning against mantelpiece.*)

GEORGIANA. Nothing that matters. Is it only because he's too shy? or is he too stupid to understand why he was asked to stay here? or perhaps he's a humorist and is secretly and silently amused at my coming-on disposition and Aunt Catherine's nods and becks and wreathed smiles. That's a horrible idea—a truly horrible idea. It never struck me before.

MRS. MACARTNEY. How can you be so idiotic!

FRANCES. You don't care for him? (*Sits on floor by GEORGIANA.*)

GEORGIANA. What's that got to do with it?

FRANCES. Don't try to be humorous. Answer my question.

GEORGIANA. I don't *dislike* him in the very least.

FRANCES. But you don't want to marry him?

GEORGIANA. I do—I want to marry him very much.

FRANCES. Why?

GEORGIANA. Why? Because every one expects it of me—and I expect it of myself.

FRANCES. And you think that's a good enough reason?

GEORGIANA. Certainly I do. It takes a confirmed spinster to be as sentimental as you are, Frances. What's to happen to me if I don't marry—what's to be the end of me? (*Crosses to piano. She then walks backwards and forwards.*) That doesn't trouble you, perhaps—but it does me. I shall just go on getting older and older and finally finish up on a pittance from my relations, in cheap seaside lodgings—with a cat. . . . Surely, you're not romantic enough to imagine that all the married women of your acquaintance have selected their more or less unsuitable husbands out of pure affection!

FRANCES. I'm not ; but I should be very sorry to think that you, or anyone else I cared for, would select a husband for any other reason.

GEORGIANA (*back R.*). It's not a case of selection with me. When you're a pauper you've got to take what comes along.

FRANCES. Georgie, you mustn't marry him !

GEORGIANA. Tell that to Aunt Catherine—and hear what she'll have to say on the subject. (*To Mrs. MACARTNEY.*) Do you know how much she gave for this dress of mine ? (*She pirouettes to show the gown.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY (*surveying it critically*). Twenty guineas ?

GEORGIANA. Under the mark. Twenty-two.

FRANCES (*impatently*). But what has that got to do—

GEORGIANA. Everything, goose ! This nice new expensive frock was a speculation on Aunt Catherine's part. (*Sits on sofa.*)

FRANCES. A speculation ? (*Sits on chair c. by table.*)

GEORGIANA. On the day that Mr. Lankester accepted her invitation to stay here, Aunt Catherine suddenly discovered that my wardrobe was badly in want of renewing. It didn't need a Sherlock Holmes to draw the very obvious inference, did it ? She came fussing up to my room before dinner, poked about among my clothes and finally declared that they were all hopelessly shabby and that she and I must have a day in London to get me some new frocks.

MRS. MACARTNEY. And you had it ? (*Sits on settee below fire-place.*)

GEORGIANA. We did—such a day ! Aunt Catherine ran up a good sixty pounds' worth of bills— all on my account—ran 'em up without turning a hair. I've never known her so generous—she stuck at nothing that she thought might possibly make me more attractive. She was perfectly—well, I can only call it reckless over the hats. Four new ones, Julia—

four new hats from Celine's in one afternoon. Well, at any rate, even if I don't get a husband, I shall have my four new hats.

FRANCES (*dryly*). That will be a consolation.

GEORGIANA. Which I shall be greatly in need of. If my position is painfully ridiculous now, it will be still more painfully ridiculous if Mr. Lankester decides that he can do without me, thank you.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Georgie—really—I never heard—

GEORGIANA (*to FRANCES*). Why this pretence of amazement, Julia, my love? You know quite well that everything I have been saying is perfectly true.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*huffily*). I don't at all, and I sincerely hope it isn't. (*Rises—to fire-place.*)

GEORGIANA. Rubbish, rubbish, rubbish!

FRANCES (*reprovingly*). Georgie, what's the matter with you to-night?

GEORGIANA. What's the matter with me? Uncertainty and self-consciousness. The whole thing's beginning to tell on my nerves.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*tartly*). And your manners, Georgie.

GEORGIANA. Quite so—and my manners. Be generous and extend your forgiveness to an unfortunate spinster who sees her last chance of matrimony trembling in the balance.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*mollified*). Not necessarily your last chance. (*Crosses to chair by table.*)

GEORGIANA. H'm—I don't know; I'm inclined to think it is. I'm getting on. Twenty-nine last April. No good attempting to conceal the fact; Debrett gives it away remorselessly. It's only the lower orders who can remain permanently at two-and-twenty.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Don't be so silly. Twenty-nine is nothing for a woman to confess to nowadays.

GEORGIANA. Twenty-nine is perilously near thirty. You should have heard Aunt Catherine sigh last time

she wished me many happy returns of the day. I knew what she was sighing over—her dwindling chances of getting somebody else to support me.

FRANCES (*comes to sofa*). Georgie, I wish you wouldn't talk like that. It's unjust to yourself and unjust to her. She's your mother's sister—she's fond of you.

GEORGIANA. I never said she wasn't—I believe she is—quite fond of me. She has always been very good to me, of course—but I should have thought even you could have seen that she's dying to get me married.

MRS. MACARTNEY. I don't think you ought to say that.

GEORGIANA. Oh, I'm not blaming her—far from it. Why should she want to be saddled with me? Daphne's getting on for seventeen. I suppose she'll be coming out in a year or so and Aunt Catherine won't want to drag me round when she has a daughter to marry. Besides, when all's said and done, I'm an expense. I eat and go railway journeys, and I must have clothes, and being one of the family, the clothes must be decent. And Uncle Theodore has plenty of other expenses just now, poor old boy. Walter has been running into debt in India—

MRS. MACARTNEY. Has he really?

GEORGIANA. Frightfully—Then Tod is going up to Christchurch in the autumn. Why, if I were Aunt Catherine I should be pining to get rid of my impecunious niece—ready and willing to thrust into her the arms of any one. And yet Frank's has the absolute brutality to suggest that I ought to refuse Mr. Lankester if he gives me the chance. You've more consideration for Aunt Catherine, haven't you, Julia? You think it's my duty to jump at him, don't you?

MRS. MACARTNEY. Georgie, you have the most extraordinary manner of looking at things.

GEORGIANA. Not at all—it's just the same as yours, really. You'd put it a little differently of

course—say it was quite time I was settled in life and that every woman is happier married. But it all comes to the same thing, however you put it—doesn't it, Frankie?

FRANCES. I quite agree with you—it does. (*Crosses to piano.*)

GEORGIANA. I know perfectly well that every one in this house, from Aunt Catherine to the scullery-maid, is wondering whether or not I shall go off at last—and that their interest is shared by the Chesneys and the Collingbournes and the Fitzarthur and the rest of the county; and I know perfectly well the sort of things you will all say if I don't go off.

MRS. MACARTNEY. How can you possibly——

GEORGIANA. I'm neither blind, deaf, nor an idiot, and of course I know. I've said just the same things about other women myself—I only wish I hadn't. I can tell you I'm dreading to-morrow morning——

MRS. MACARTNEY. To-morrow morning?

GEORGIANA. If—nothing happens. I can just imagine what Aunt Catherine's face will look like over the tea-cups—gloomy but resigned—regretting that wasted sixty pounds——

MRS. MACARTNEY. What nonsense!

GEORGIANA. Nobody will say anything, of course, but every one will be contemptuously sympathetic—and I shall feel unutterably small. Delightful prospect, isn't it? Still, the other's not much more inviting.

MRS. MACARTNEY. The other! (*Sits on sofa.*)

GEORGIANA. Getting engaged. Can't you imagine the fuss.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Oh, engagements always mean that.

GEORGIANA. The fuss—and the bother.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Georgie, really——

GEORGIANA. I am sure Uncle Theodore will say that he has always looked upon me as a daughter——

it's just the sort of thing he would say. And I know every one will insist on embracing me—

FRANCES (*quietly*). Including Mr. Lankester. (*Walking to back of sofa.*)

GEORGIANA (*turns swiftly and looks at her—then shrugs her shoulders*). No doubt—and I suppose I shall have to call him Adam! What a name to have inflicted on you by your godfathers and godmothers at your baptism—Adam!

FRANCES (*quietly*). As you don't seem to care for either of the alternatives you've mentioned, why not try a third? (*Leans over the back of sofa R. of GEORGIANA.*)

GEORGIANA. Because there isn't a third.

FRANCES. There is—if you've the pluck to take it.

GEORGIANA. What is it?

FRANCES. Come up to London with me to-morrow morning?

GEORGIANA. To London with you. What for?

FRANCES. I can put you up for as long as you like—permanently.

GEORGIANA. Permanently? What do you mean?

FRANCES. If you lived with me you need not cost Sir Theodore more than a pound or so a week—very much less than you cost him here. You could put that to him. You'd have to do without a good deal; but you'd be able to stand on your own, and—respect yourself.

GEORGIANA (*sharply*). Respect myself?

FRANCES (*quietly*). You don't feel much respect for yourself now, do you?

GEORGIANA (*opens her mouth as if to speak, then checks herself, after a moment*). You're rather rude, Frankie—but you mean well.

FRANCES. I do. Well, what's the answer?

GEORGIANA. My dear Frankie, no. I'm afraid I'm going to be rude too—but do you remember the last time I came to see you in the back room you call your studio?

FRANCES. Oh, yes—nearly three months ago. What about it?

GEORGIANA. It was getting on for six o'clock in the evening, and you were having a meal which might have been either a late afternoon tea or an early dinner. It consisted, if I remember rightly, of tea, stewed prunes, cold potatoes and sausages—the sausages were frying on an oil-stove when I came in—a smelly oil-stove.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*seated*). Georgie—don't exaggerate.

GEORGIANA. I'm not exaggerating. It's quite true, isn't it?

FRANCES. Quite.

GEORGIANA. I wondered how on earth you could stand it. I know I couldn't. Thank you very much, Frankie.

FRANCES. All right.

(*Enter FOOTMAN by door above fire-place R. carrying coffee-tray, which he sets on table by sofa and exits. Immediately after him BERTHA GRAYLE, a plump school girl with her hair down her back. GEORGIANA has gone up stage.*)

BERTHA. Hallo! where's everybody? (*Crosses to piano.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. Your mother's writing letters and the men are still in the dining-room.

BERTHA (*not seeing GEORGIANA*). And where's Georgie? Wandering round the garden with Mr. Lankester as usual?

GEORGIANA (*turning sharply*). Go and tell Aunt Catherine that coffee's here—she's in the library.

BERTHA (*sniggering*). Oh, all right. Didn't see you were there—sorry.

(*Exit.*)

GEORGIANA (*pouring out coffee sarcastically*). That's

the sort of thing I ought to pretend not to notice. Sugar?

(Enter TOD GRAYLE L.—*about eighteen, a typical public school boy.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. Here you are, Tod—at last. What a time you've all been.

TOD (*handing coffee*). Lankester's been telling us stories—backwoods and all that sort of thing—some of 'em quite good. He's really an interesting chap when you *can* get him to speak—(*meaningly*), isn't he, Georgie?

GEORGINA (*snappishly*). I'm sure I don't know.

TOD. Don't you get him to speak, then?

(Enter LADY CATHERINE and BERTHA. As LADY CATHERINE comes in GEORGINA relinquishes her seat on sofa.)

LADY CATHERINE. So sorry to desert you all for such a long time, but I had my Indian letter to get off to Walter. (*As GEORGINA gives her coffee.*) Thank you, Georgie. Tod, tell your father coffee's ready—oh, here he is. (*She sits in GEORGINA'S place on sofa.*)

(Enter SIR THEODORE GREYLE and ADAM LANKESTER.

ADAM is a big, bronzed man, slow and awkward in his movements and manifestly ill at ease in the presence of ladies.)

SIR THEODORE. Really, you don't say so. And for five months you never saw a human being? I wonder you could stand it—the loneliness—the strain on your nerves----

ADAM. Oh, you can stand most things if you have to.

SIR THEODORE. Lankester has been giving us some of his experiences in the far North-West—most thrilling. (*Sits c.*)

LADY CATHERINE. Why haven't we been treated

to any of them, Mr. Lankester? I delight in thrilling stories.

ADAM (*awkwardly*). I'm afraid they wouldn't interest you much, Lady Catherine; they're only about—about things that happened to me—out there——

MRS. MACARTNEY. About things that happened to you—that would make them all the more exciting——

ADAM. Oh, I don't know.

BERTHA. Come along, Mr. Lankester, let's have one now—something blood-curdling with a bear in it. (*On stool with her back to the audience.*)

ADAM (*stammering*). I'm afraid—I really——

GEORGIANA. Coffee, Mr. Lankester? (*Over to ADAM L.*)

(LADY CATHERINE *frowns and shakes her head at*
BERTHA.)

ADAM. Thank you.

GEORGIANA. Wait a minute. I haven't given you any milk.

ADAM. Oh, it doesn't matter—thanks.

(*He takes his cup and sits down a little apart as if nervously anxious not to be drawn into conversation.*)

SIR THEODORE. I'm sorry you can't spare us another day or two, Miss Melliship.

FRANCES. I'm sorry too; but I'm afraid my work can't wait.

MRS. MACARTNEY. I thought that the beauty of being an artist was that you could choose your own time and work when you liked and how you liked.

FRANCES. Not when you do black and white for cheap papers—but perhaps that isn't being an artist. I've got lot of work to get through this week, so I really must be off by the early train to-morrow. Mr. Lankester's going at the same time, isn't he?

LADY CATHERINE. I believe so. (*FRANCES rises.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. You'll be able to travel up to London together.

TOD. Feel inclined for a game of billiards, Lankester?

LADY CATHERINE. Tod, I really cannot allow you to drag Mr. Lankester off to the billiard-room every night. I know he only plays to please you.

ADAM. Really I—

LADY CATHERINE. No, Mr. Lankester, I shan't let you be victimized over that stupid game. You're much too good-natured.

TOD. Why, mater—

MRS. MACARTNEY (*up from sofa she crosses L.C. to TOD*). Will you take me on, Tod, or don't you think me worthy of your cue? Give me fifty up and I'll make a fight for it.

TOD. All right. (*Exit R.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. And Bertha can mark for us. (*Above sofa.*) Are you coming to look on, Miss Melliship—and jeer at my flukes.

FRANCES. Oh, very well.

(*Exit BERTHA, MRS. MACARTNEY, FRANCES.*)

(*GEORGIANA has risen and is standing by the window looking out into the garden.*)

LADY CATHERINE. Georgie, if you're going out into the garden, it's much too damp to go without a wrap. I'm sure Mr. Lankester will fetch you one out of the hall.

ADAM. Oh, certainly.

(*Exit into hall.*)

(*GEORGIANA does not turn or take any notice until he returns carrying a wrap.*)

Is this—I hope this will do?

GEORGIANA. Quite well—thanks.

(*He puts it round her.*)

Are you coming out?

ADAM. I should like it above all things—if I may.

(*Exit ADAM and GEORGINA into garden.*)

(*LADY CATHERINE, who has taken out some fancy work, looks after them. SIR THEODORE puts down his cup and moves towards the door. She turns as she hears him.*)

LADY CATHERINE. Where are you going, Theodore?

SIR THEODORE. To the study. Mercer is waiting to see me—something about those repairs, I suppose. (*Leans over sofa at door up R.*)

LADY CATHERINE. Wait a moment. I want to speak to you.

SIR THEODORE. What about?

LADY CATHERINE. Georgie and Mr. Lankester.

SIR THEODORE. Georgie and Mr. Lankester? What about them? Do you mean he has—

LADY CATHERINE. No, he hasn't.

SIR THEODORE. He hasn't! Dear me—I was in hopes—

LADY CATHERINE. So was I; and it's just because he has not said anything to her that I felt bound to discuss things with you. This is his last evening here.

SIR THEODORE. Then do you think he doesn't intend— (*Coming c.*)

LADY CATHERINE. I really don't know. I am quite at a loss to understand his conduct—it is most incomprehensible. He is always with Georgie—follows her about from morning till night and does not seem happy out of her sight—and yet— (*Shrugs her shoulders.*)

SIR THEODORE. Dear, dear! It would be a very desirable match for her—suitable in every way. (*Over to sofa R.*)

LADY CATHERINE. Of course it would.

SIR THEODORE. As you say, his—er—attentions have certainly been very marked.

LADY CATHERINE. Of course they have—and that is why something must be done.

SIR THEODORE. Something must be done?

LADY CATHERINE. If he does not speak to her to-night.

SIR THEODORE (*round sofa*). But, my dear Catherine, what is to be done? If a man won't come to the point, he won't. You can bring a horse to the water, you know, but you can't make him drink. I'm sure you have given him every opportunity of —er—becoming thoroughly acquainted with Georgie and —er—ascertaining the state of his feelings towards her.

LADY CATHERINE. I know I have. The next step rests with you.

SIR THEODORE. With me? (*Sit on sofa R. of LADY CATHERINE.*)

LADY CATHERINE. And it must certainly be taken before Mr. Lankester leaves the house to-morrow morning.

SIR THEODORE. But what I don't understand.

LADY CATHERINE. My dear Theodore, you surely understand that when an unmarried man pays as much attention to an unmarried woman as Mr. Lankester has done to Georgie, he makes her, to say the least of it, conspicuous.

SIR THEODORE. Certainly, certainly.

LADY CATHERINE. And he gives her and her relations every right to believe that he intends to ask her to be his wife. I am sure we have all of us been under that impression.

SIR THEODORE. Oh, certainly, certainly.

LADY CATHERINE. You surely understand, too, that Georgie's position, if Mr. Lankester does not eventually propose to her, will be a most unpleasant one.

SIR THEODORE. Yes, yes.

LADY CATHERINE. She has given him a certain amount of encouragement.

SIR THEODORE. She has decidedly—she has.

LADY CATHERINE (*reprovingly*). Encouragement which, under the circumstances, I consider she was quite entitled to give him.

SIR THEODORE. Oh, no doubt.

LADY CATHERINE. But that will not make things any better for her if Mr. Lankester walks out of the house without having committed himself to a—a definite declaration.

SIR THEODORE. No, no, of course not—of course not. It would be most unfortunate for her.

LADY CATHERINE. It would. You know what people would say—that she had been running after him, throwing herself at his head. And that is why I feel that you are in duty bound to interfere in her interests.

SIR THEODORE (*uneasily*). To interfere?

LADY CATHERINE. As Georgiana's uncle——

SIR THEODORE. Only by marriage, my dear.

LADY CATHERINE. That doesn't matter. To all intents and purposes you are her guardian and therefore perfectly justified in pointing out to Mr. Lankester that his attentions have, to a certain extent, compromised her—and you must find out what he means to do.

SIR THEODORE. But my dear Catherine—I don't think you quite realize what a very unpleasant—what a very awkward thing—you were asking me to—— (*Up to fire-place.*)

LADY CATHERINE. It has got to be done all the same. Georgie's chances of a settlement in life, of—of happiness, in short, are at stake, and I feel that we must not let the opportunity slip for want of a little plain speaking.

SIR THEODORE. Oh, I agree with you there—I agree entirely. But—er—if plain speaking is required, don't you think that you are the best person?

LADY CATHERINE. I do not. You are the head of the family; the intervention must come from you and from no one else.

SIR THEODORE. But my dear, it seems to me that it's more than possible that our—my intervention in such an—er—delicate matter may defeat its own ends. I mean that it is quite likely that Lankester may resent having pressure put upon him. What do you think—eh?

LADY CATHERINE. After the way he has hung about Georgie for the last fortnight he has no right to resent it.

SIR THEODORE. I should, I know.

LADY CATHERINE. It's no use arguing, Theodore. There is only one conclusion to be drawn from his attitude towards her and that he must be made to see; and I rely upon you to make him see it—tactfully, of course. By plain speaking I don't mean aggressiveness.

SIR THEODORE. No, no, of course not, but——

LADY CATHERINE. Tell him that you are very reluctant to introduce the topic—I know you are, so that will be perfectly true—but that, as Georgie's uncle, you have no choice—you feel your responsibility——

SIR THEODORE. Yes, yes—I understand. But it will be most—most awkward, most difficult—most——

LADY CATHERINE. It has got to be done.

SIR THEODORE (*sighs gloomily*). I wonder how he will take it? (*Sits on chair.*)

LADY CATHERINE. I shouldn't be at all surprised if he was very much obliged to you for broaching the subject.

SIR THEODORE. Obligated to me?

LADY CATHERINE. Yes; I can't help hoping that it is largely his extraordinary—his really uncouth shyness, which has prevented him from—from doing what we have every right to expect of him. If that is the case he will be only too thankful to have the way made easy for him by a hint from you.

SIR THEODORE (*doubtfully*). H'm—and supposing he isn't thankful and declines to take the hint?

LADY CATHERINE. Then you ought certainly to let him know that you consider his conduct has been anything but honourable.

SIR THEODORE (*testily, crosses c.*). My dear Catherine, you know how much I dislike anything in the nature of a— a difference of opinion. These sort of scenes are most repellant to me. I do wish—I really do wish that you would undertake this most unpleasant duty yourself. You are so much better qualified than I am——

LADY CATHERINE. Quite impossible.

SIR THEODORE (*pettishly*). And when is this interview—this very trying interview—to come off?

LADY CATHERINE. To-night——

SIR THEODORE. To-night?

LADY CATHERINE. Of course; Mr. Lankester is leaving the first thing in the morning. If he has said nothing to Georgie by the time she goes upstairs you must speak to him.

SIR THEODORE. H'm. He's in the garden with her now, isn't he? (*Looks through window.*)

LADY CATHERINE (*nods*). Of course, it's quite possible that your interview may be unnecessary.

SIR THEODORE (*irritably*). I sincerely hope so. I don't know how I am going to get through the business, Catherine. I really don't. It is the—the most awkward thing I have ever been asked to do. I shan't be able to settle down to anything all the evening. I really think——

LADY CATHERINE. Didn't you say Mercer was waiting to see you about some repairs?

SIR THEODORE. Umph!

(*Exit L. crossly banging the door behind him.*)

(*LADY CATHERINE goes on with her work. Enter FOOTMAN to remove coffee tray.*)

LADY CATHERINE. Tell Hopkins the carriage will be wanted to-morrow morning in time for the 9.17.

FOOTMAN. Yes, my lady.

(Exit FOOTMAN with coffee tray.)

(LADY CATHERINE suddenly raises her head and looks at the window expectantly. Then her face falls as GEORGIANA and LANKESTER enter from garden, walking a little distance apart and silent.)

LADY CATHERINE. Well, where have you been?

GEORGIANA *(with an undercurrent of irritation in her voice)*. Straight down the path to the end of the garden. We stood and looked over the fence and then turned round and came straight back again.

(ADAM and GEORGIANA behind sofa.)

ADAM. Miss Vicary thought it felt rather damp.

GEORGIANA. Damp and depressing. Do you mind hanging up my cloak?

ADAM. I beg your pardon.

(Takes cloak and exits into hall.)

(GEORGIANA sits on sofa without looking at LADY CATHERINE, who looks at her and sighs audibly. Neither speaks. Re-enter ADAM.)

LADY CATHERINE *(hunting about in her work-basket)*. Dear me!

GEORGIANA. What's the matter?

LADY CATHERINE. My skein of geranium-coloured silk—it doesn't seem to be here. Let me see, where can I have left it? In the morning-room, I expect.

GEORGIANA *(from sofa)*. Shall I go and look for it?

LADY CATHERINE. No, no—I'd rather go myself. I'm not quite sure I left it there—it may be upstairs.

(As ADAM opens door L.)

Thank you.

(Exit LADY CATHERINE.)

(ADAM looks uncertainly at GEORGIANA, who sits with her head on her hand; then comes down.)

ADAM. You're not feeling well to-night, Miss Vicary? (*Behind sofa.*)

GEORGIANA. What makes you say that? Is it a nice polite way of telling me that I'm looking particularly plain?

ADAM. Indeed it's not. I've never seen you look prettier—(*with sudden confusion*)—if you'll allow me to say so.

GEORGIANA. Oh, I'll certainly allow you to say so. Remarks of that kind don't offend me in the very least. You like my dress, then?

ADAM. It's charming and——(*He hesitates.*)

GEORGIANA. And what?

ADAM. I was going to say that it was almost charming enough to be worthy of its wearer.

GEORGIANA. Thank you for a very pretty speech.

ADAM (*standing behind the sofa and looking down*). It—it wasn't only a pretty speech—I meant it.

GEORGIANA (*in a low voice*). Did you?

(*Her hand is lying along the back of the sofa: he makes a motion as if to seize it, then draws back and walks away. GEORGIANA waits for him to speak, then lifts her head and glances at him quickly.*)

Let me see—this is your last evening here, isn't it?

ADAM. Yes. I'm going to-morrow morning, I'm sorry to say. (*Crosses L.*)

GEORGIANA. I'm sorry too. We shall miss you.

ADAM. It's very kind of you to say so.

(*A slight pause—he comes down and she makes room for him on the sofa.*)

GEORGIANA. What time are you going? (*Moves R, end of sofa.*)

ADAM. By the early train. (*Moves to sofa.*)

GEORGIANA. The 9.17?

ADAM. Yes.

GEORGIANA. Then you'll have to leave here quite by twenty to nine—before the rest of us are down to breakfast.

ADAM. I suppose I shall. *(Sits on sofa.)*

GEORGIANA. That means—— *(She stops.)*

ADAM. You were going to say?

GEORGIANA. I was going to say that it means I must say good-bye to you to-night.

ADAM. I suppose it does. I wonder when I am likely to see you—all—again?

GEORGIANA. Not for some time, I am afraid. I don't think there is any likelihood of our being in London this autumn.

ADAM. I see.

GEORGIANA. I hope—if we don't see you again just yet—that you won't quite forget us all, Mr. Lankester.

ADAM. I've got a lot of shortcomings, Miss Vicary, but I don't think I'm the sort of man that forgets his friends. And—some of my friends I—I couldn't forget if I wanted to. Not that I do want to. *(He stammers and stops.)* You're much more likely to forget all about me.

GEORGIANA. I don't think so. I am sure I --we—shall not forget.

ADAM. Thank you.

(A silence. He sits looking away from her. She glances at him, then, seeing that his head is turned away, she unfastens her bracelet and lets it roll on the floor.)

GEORGIANA. Oh, my bracelet.

(As he picks it up.)

Oh, thank you so much.

(As he is about to hand it to her she holds out her arm for him to put it on. He does so, his hands shaking.)

It fastens with a snap—the snap isn't broken, is it?

ADAM *(fumbling with it)*. No, I don't think so.

I'm afraid I'm awfully clumsy at this sort of thing.

GEORGIANA (*leaning her head towards him and appearing to look at bracelet.*) It's a rather difficult clasp.

ADAM. That's it, isn't it? (*He drops her arm.*)

GEORGIANA. Yes, that's it. It's quite all right now—thank you very much. (*She leans back resignedly.*) Quite all right.

(*There is a momentary silence and then GEORGIANA rises suddenly and irritably walks to the piano and stands beside it playing with one finger. ADAM remains seated. She plays "When we are Married."*)

ADAM (*with an effort*). You are fond of music, Miss Vicary?

GEORGIANA. Not particularly.

ADAM. But you play.

GEORGIANA. I can do this sort of thing—with one finger. I don't know that I should call it playing. (*She continues to strum.*)

ADAM. What—what's the name of that tune?

GEORGIANA (*beating out the tune on the piano*). Don't you recognize it?

ADAM (*trying to make conversation*). It's very pretty.

GEORGIANA. Do you think so?

ADAM. Yes—I like it.

GEORGIANA. I don't.

(*Continues strumming, then suddenly breaks off in the middle of a phrase, shuts the piano with a bang and walks towards him sharply with her hand outstretched.*)

Good night! (*Curtly.*)

ADAM. You're going?

GEORGIANA. To bed—yes. I'm tired—got a headache.

ADAM. I'm so sorry—I hope—

GEORGIANA (*cutting him short*). Good night.

ADAM. Good night.

(She turns brusquely and goes to door. ADAM stands staring after her till she reaches it.)

ADAM *(suddenly)*. Miss Vicary! *(Crosses to her L.)*

GEORGIANA *(turning)*. Yes.

ADAM. Don't go for a minute—don't go, please.

GEORGIANA. Why not?

ADAM. Because— (He hesitates.)

GEORGIANA. Yes.

ADAM. Because—Georgie, I want you, I love you.

GEORGIANA *(standing quite still and looking down)*.
You love me?

ADAM. I do—with all my soul, I do. You must have seen it, you must have guessed it. Georgie, Georgie, is it yes or no?

GEORGIANA *(without moving or raising her head)*.
It's yes.

ADAM *(draws a long breath)*. It's—yes. Thank the Lord, it's yes.

(He strides across the room to her and seizes her in his arms.)

My girl—my own girl! Kiss me.

GEORGIANA *(with a sudden impulse, pushing him away)*. No—I—

ADAM *(astonished)*. You won't? What have I done? I didn't mean, Georgie—

GEORGIANA *(recovering herself, laughing nervously)*.
You nearly pulled my hair down—with your arm.
You must be—careful. *(Going centre to chair, back to audience.)*

ADAM *(relieved)*. Is that all? I thought it was something serious. I'll be very careful this time. I won't even touch your pretty hair.

(He takes her in his arms and kisses her; she submits.)

You blessed little soul! Great snakes—what a lucky chap I am! You mayn't have chosen anything very much in the way of a husband, but you shall

never regret having said yes to me to-night—never, so long as I live and so help me God! And so you love me, eh? Say it—I will hear you say it.

GEORGIANA. I—— (*She stops.*)

ADAM. Say it! Say it!

GEORGIANA (*huskily*). I love you.

ADAM. That's the best thing I've ever heard in my life.

GEORGIANA. Let me go now.

ADAM. Why?

GEORGIANA. Some one might come.

ADAM. Hang some one! I don't care if they do. Let 'em come—let 'em all come.

GEORGIANA. But I care—I should hate it. Please, Mr. Lankester—

ADAM. Adam!

GEORGIANA. Adam, then. Let me go, please.

(*He releases her; she sits, nervously uneasy and trying to control herself.*)

ADAM (*laughing*). And to think how frightened I was of you a little time ago!

GEORGIANA. Were you? (*Leaning on piano.*)

ADAM. Frightened isn't the word. I was terrified, Georgie—terrified to death of a bit of a thing like you.

GEORGIANA. You needn't have been. (*L. of piano.*)

ADAM. Ah, but I'm not used to women, you see—your sort. You've been right out of my life for ten years now and I don't know how to take you. Do you know, I've been on the point of asking you half a dozen times the last few days—I have—and every blessed time I've funk'd it. I was on the verge of speaking out before to-night—

GEORGIANA. Were you?

ADAM. Yes—twice. (*Goes up to her.*) When I was putting on your bracelet just now your dear little face was so close to mine—and, Georgie, *you don't know* how I longed to kiss you.

GEORGIANA. Did you? (*At piano.*)

ADAM. And a quarter of an hour ago when we were in the garden—when we turned round at the end of the path. I was behind you and you looked so sweet, I almost caught you in my arms—and then I simply daren't. I was so sickeningly afraid of what you'd say.

GEORGIANA (*trying to laugh*). Oh, you needn't have been afraid.

ADAM (*laughing now and again from sheer happiness as he rattles on*). Ah, I know that now, but I didn't know it then. That makes all the difference. There's one thing you women score over: you don't have to screw your courage up to putting the question—you're spared that. It's an awful job. Ouf, I'm glad it's over. If I'd only been a bit surer of you, Georgie, I'd have put myself out of my misery days ago.

GEORGIANA. It's almost a pity you didn't. (*Kneels on stool, and leaning over piano.*)

ADAM. When did you first begin to care for me, then?

GEORGIANA. Oh, I don't really know—it's so difficult to say.

ADAM. But you must have some sort of an idea. Come now.

GEORGIANA (*nervously*). I—I liked you very much when I met you at the Collingbournes—very much indeed.

ADAM. But you didn't think of me as a possible husband then?

GEORGIANA. No—it wasn't until later that I began to think of you as a possible husband.

ADAM. When I came down here, a fortnight ago, I had quite made up my mind to ask you to be my wife.

GEORGIANA. Had you?

ADAM. Although I hadn't the pluck to speak out, you must have seen that I cared for you.

GEORGIANA. I wasn't sure, of course; but I thought so.

ADAM. And you hoped so?

GEORGIANA. Yes, I hoped so.

ADAM. That's right. . . . What's the ring to be, eh? Sapphires, diamonds, emeralds? (*Taking her hand and playing with her fingers.*)

GEORGIANA. Oh, I don't much mind -- diamonds, I think.

ADAM. Diamonds it shall be, then. (*He snatches up her hand, turns its palm upwards, and kisses it.*) By Jove, I am a lucky devil! D'you know what I feel like, Georgie? As if I could burst out into poetry if I only knew the way.

GEORGIANA. Oh, please don't. (*Breaks away from him.*)

ADAM (*laughing heartily*). Never you fear—I don't know the way. Poetry isn't much in my line; but if it was, I'm sure I could write yards about you.

GEORGIANA. I'm afraid you'll be horribly disillusioned when you come to know me better. I should call myself a distinctly prosaic person. (*mimes c. He stops her.*)

ADAM. Whatever you are, you're the one person in the world I can't do without. Good God, how I love you, Georgie. (*He puts his arm round her and draws her to him.*)

(*She shivers and closes her eyes. He is about to kiss her when the door opens and BERTHA GRAYLE enters.*)

BERTHA (*seeing them, stops short*). Oh!

(*They start and draw apart; she giggles.*)

I beg your pardon.

(*Exit BERTHA.*)

GEORGIANA (*going to fire-place*). The little wretch—she saw us—

ADAM (*follows her and takes her two hands*). Never mind; who cares! I've a right to kiss you if I like, haven't I?

GEORGINA. It will be all over the place now. She's sure to go straight to Aunt Catherine.

ADAM. Well, let her. What does that matter?
(*Releasing her.*)

GEORGINA (*resignedly*). And now for congratulations. (*Sits on settee down stage.*)

ADAM. Do you object to congratulations, then?

GEORGINA. I hate fuss—especially sentimental fuss and kisses.

ADAM (*on the hearthrug*). I suppose it's natural for you to feel that way—but I don't. I feel as if I wanted everybody to know of my luck—as if I wanted to shake hands with 'em and tell 'em all about it.

GEORGINA. Are you as happy as all that?

ADAM (*laughing and walking up and down*). Of course I am—and a great deal happier. Even now I can't believe it, Georgie—I simply can't believe it. (*Stopping suddenly and turning to her.*) I say, though——

GEORGINA. What?

ADAM. Supposing the congratulations don't come off? Supposing it's the other way round, and Sir Theodore and Lady Catherine object—

GEORGINA. Oh, there's not the faintest chance of that.

ADAM. You're sure?

GEORGINA. Dead sure. They'll be perfectly delighted.

ADAM. That's all right. Not that it would have made any difference, eh, little woman? You've said yes, so it doesn't much matter who says no. Still——

(*Enter LADY CATHERINE, followed by SIR THEODORE, then later MRS. MACARTNEY, BERTHA and TOD.*)

ADAM (*going to them*). Lady Catherine—Sir Theodore—I don't know what you'll say, but I've had the cheek—I can only call it the cheek—to ask Georgie to be my wife—and she's said yes.

LADY CATHERINE (*shaking his hand.*) My dear Mr. Lankester—

ADAM. Then you don't disapprove, Lady Catherine?

LADY CATHERINE. Certainly not. (*Archly.*) I don't disapprove if Georgie approves.

SIR THEODORE (*jocosely*). And Georgie does, eh? Well, well, well (*shakes hands*), my heartiest congratulations, Lankester—my very heartiest congratulations.

GEORGIANA. I told him you'd be delighted, Uncle Theodore.

SIR THEODORE. I am I am. Though, all the same, mind you, I ought to bear you a grudge for taking Georgie away from us. We've always looked upon her as a daughter, haven't we, Catherine? And we shall miss her terribly when you carry her off. But we can't expect you to take that into consideration, eh?

ADAM. Hardly. I should miss her more if I let you keep her.

BERTHA. Then is Georgie really engaged?

TOD. Rather! Buck up, Georgie, and don't look so shy. It's what we all come to.

LADY CATHERINE (*reprovingly*). Tod!

SIR THEODORE (*going to GEORGIANA*). My dear girl, my very dear girl, my warmest congratulations (*Takes her face between his hands and kisses one cheek.*) And my most earnest wishes for your future happiness. I feel sure it is in good hands. (*Kisses her other cheek.*)

GEORGIANA. Thank you, Uncle Theodore.

LADY CATHERINE (*going to her*). Dearest, I need not tell you how delighted I am—how really and truly delighted. When I think of your poor dear mother and how glad she would have been. (*Kisses her on both cheeks.*)

(*GEORGIANA turns her head automatically to be kissed.*)

GEORGLANA. Thank you, Aunt Catherine.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*coming forward and kissing her effusively, same bus.*). Dear Georgie——

GEORGLANA. Thank you, Julia.

BERTHA (*giggling*). I congratulate you, Georgie.

GEORGLANA. Good heavens, do you want to kiss me too? Come along, then.

(*She seizes BERTHA by the hair, pulling back her head and gives a vicious peck at each of her cheeks.*)

BERTHA. Ow—Geogie!

GEORGLANA. There you are. Had enough or would you like any more? Now then (*stands with her arms to her sides and her face lifted stiffly*), anyone else want to fall on my neck? If so, please come on and get it over. What about you, Tod? Aren't you yearning to embrace each of my blushing cheeks?

TOD (*decidedly*). No, thanks!

GEORGLANA. That's a mercy—much obliged. Then, as there appears to be no further offers, I suppose the touching ceremony may be considered at an end. (*To ADAM.*) You're delighted—I'm delighted—every one's delighted and—we're engaged!

ADAM (*laughing, draws her hand through his arm and pats it proudly*). Yes, we're engaged.

CURTAIN.

ACT II

Two months later.

*The library in SIR THEODORE GRAYLE'S country house.
It is evening. The lamps are lit and fires blazing.
A plan of the scene will be found at the end of the
play.*

*(As the curtain rises, LADY CATHERINE GRAYLE is
discovered alone, writing at table. Then enter
FOOTMAN R.)*

FOOTMAN. Mrs. Macartney.

(Enter MRS. MACARTNEY in travelling dress.)

(Exit FOOTMAN.)

LADY CATHERINE *(going to her)*. My dear Julia.
So nice to see you again—our first arrival. You're
not wet?

MRS. MACARTNEY. Not a bit, thanks. But what
odious weather! It will be too sad if it's like this
to-morrow.

LADY CATHERINE. Oh, let's hope it will clear up.
You'll have some tea?

MRS. MACARTNEY. No, thank you—really no.

LADY CATHERINE. You're sure?

MRS. MACARTNEY. Sure. I had a tea-basket in
the train—quite drinkable. Mr. Lankester got it for
me at the junction.

LADY CATHERINE. Adam! You travelled with
him, then?

MRS. MACARTNEY. All the way—ran up against

him on the platform at St. Pancras. He really surprised me—I never saw such a change in a man.

(*Both sit at round table.*)

LADY CATHERINE. A change?

MRS. MACARTNEY. He can actually talk now.

LADY CATHERINE. Oh yes, Georgie has improved him wonderfully.

MRS. MACARTNEY. He talked the whole way—nearly all the time about her.

LADY CATHERINE. I can quite believe it.

MRS. MACARTNEY. I assure you it was really touching.

LADY CATHERINE. Yes, I don't think I ever met a man who was more devoted. And between ourselves, Julia, it isn't only talk. He has acted most properly—most generously—in other ways.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Settlements?

LADY CATHERINE (*nods*). Yes. Dear Georgie's future is quite secure, I am thankful to say—quite secure.

MRS. MACARTNEY. That is very satisfactory.

LADY CATHERINE. Very. I suppose Adam has gone to the *Crown*?

MRS. MACARTNEY. Yes. He told me he was just going to leave his luggage there and that he should be round here before very long. . . . And so I am the first arrival—no one else has turned up yet?

LADY CATHERINE. Not yet, but there will be several more by dinner time. My sister Constantia and the Montgomerys ought to be here between half-past six and seven—you know Betty Montgomery is one of the bridesmaids.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Oh, is she—I hadn't heard.

LADY CATHERINE. Then the Felix Mundays are motoring over from Wroxford—we expect them to dine. The Champions and the Merricks are coming down from the North, so they won't be here till later.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Quite a houseful.

LADY CATHERINE. Oh, quite. It has been a regular business to fit them all in. I suppose Georgie's told you, when she wrote, that they have settled on the Italian Lakes for the honeymoon?

MRS. MACARTNEY. No, she didn't—Georgie's letters never tell anything. . . . And how is she—very happy?

LADY CATHERINE (*quickly*). Oh, of course. . . . She has been wonderfully lucky about presents—wonderfully. You must come and have a look at them directly. By the bye, those beautiful candlesticks of yours. . . .

(*Enter FOOTMAN carrying two large parcels.*)

FOOTMAN. For Miss Vicary, my lady—they've just come. I think they're what she was expecting.

LADY CATHERINE. Oh, that's right. Tell Miss Vicary they're here—

(*Exit FOOTMAN.*)

Thank goodness—that's a weight off my mind. They're from Celine—Georgie's going-away coat and hat. They ought to have come days ago, and we were beginning to get horribly nervous about them. I wired twice to Celine yesterday and three times this morning.

(*Enter GEORGIANA. She is rather pale and tired-looking; her manner is nervous and jerky.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY (*going to her*). Well, Georgie dearest!

GEORGIANA. Julia!—I didn't know you'd come! Frederick only told me it was parcels. I was upstairs reading the Marriage Service.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Sorry to interrupt such an interesting occupation.

GEORGIANA. Yes, it is interesting, if embarrassing in places.

LADY CATHERINE. Georgie, my dear—

GEORGIANA. I don't believe I ever thanked you properly for the candlesticks, Julia—I scribbled off to you when my brain was in a muddle of trousseau and house-hunting. They're simply lovely. I tell Adam I shall have to educate him up to them. He doesn't know what Sheffield plate means at present.

LADY CATHERINE. Adam and Julia travelled from St. Pancras together. He will be here directly—he has only gone to leave his things at the *Crown*.

GEORGIANA (*over to chair L.*). Oh—will he? . . . These are the boxes from Celine's, I suppose—my going-away garments?

MRS. MACARTNEY (*as GEORGIANA picks up parcels*). You're surely not going to carry them off without letting us have a peep at them? (*Crosses to desk L. to get scissors.*)

LADY CATHERINE. Certainly not. Of course we want to see them. Here are the scissors.

GEORGIANA (*cutting string*). Oh, all right. (*Takes out coat and holds it up.*) There you are.

MRS. MACARTNEY. My dear, what an exquisite colour.

GEORGIANA. "The bride's going-away costume consisted of a long coat in the latest tint of soft per-venche blue, lined with satin of the same shade, and fastened at the side with enamelled buttons; the large picture hat to match was daintily trimmed with a cluster of ostrich plumes——" that is to say if Celine has done what she was told. (*Opening hat box.*) Yes, she has.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Do put them on, Georgie.

GEORGIANA. Oh, bother—I thought it was supposed to be unlucky.

LADY CATHERINE. Only the wedding dress.

GEORGIANA. Oh, very well. (*Puts on hat and coat at glass.*) Like 'em?

(*GEORGIANA swishes up and down with a swing of the hips and the hands turned outwards like a model at a dressmaker's.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. Charming—charming—just your shade. And fits you perfectly.

LADY CATHERINE (*going all round her*). Perfect. Celine's cut is exquisite. I can almost forgive her for frightening us so—I had really begun to be afraid that she didn't mean to send them in time.

MRS. MACARTNEY. What a fearful catastrophe! What would you have done, Georgie?

GEORGIANA (*taking off hat and flinging coat on to the back of a chair*). Done without 'em, I suppose. After all, the ceremony would have been quite legal without a coat to go away in. I don't know that I should have minded much—and as for Adam, he wouldn't have minded at all. It would be all the same to him if I was married in a flannel petticoat and went away in a mackintosh. (*Coming down to chair with its back to the audience, below the round table.*)

LADY CATHERINE. I should think he would object very strongly.

GEORGIANA. Oh no, he wouldn't. He's as much in love with me as all that—quite as much.

MRS. MACARTNEY. What a truly delightful state of things.

GEORGIANA. Yes, isn't it— isn't it delightful?

(*Enter BERTHA GRAYLE excitedly. She is wearing a light coloured bridesmaid's dress which she holds together at the waist. She stops near door.*)

BERTHA. Look here, mother—just look at this.

LADY CATHERINE. My dear child, what's the matter?

BERTHA. My bridesmaid's dress—Mrs. Horrocks has just sent it back. I told her to take the waist-band in an inch and she has taken it in about six. I can't possibly get it to meet. Look! (*Coming c.*)

LADY CATHERINE. Really, Mrs. Horrocks is too bad! (*Crosses to door.*)

BERTHA. Isn't she—provoking beast! What am

I to do, mother? It's too late to send it back to her now.

LADY CATHERINE. We must see what Wilson can do. I'll come up to the work-room with you and talk to her about it. (*Exit R.*)

BERTHA. I believe the wretch has ruined it.

GEORGIANA. You're getting too fat, Bertha, that's what it is. You should bant—give up wallowing in buttery things at tea-time.

BERTHA. Oh, shut up! I hope *your* skirt won't meet round the waist to-morrow.

(*Exit BERTHA.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY (*sits on chair L. of table*). What an appalling wish—poor Bertha!

GEORGIANA (*abruptly*). So you travelled down with Adam? (*Sits R. of table.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. Yes—and we talked about you all the way.

GEORGIANA. That goes without saying. If you travelled down with Adam, of course you talked about me—all the way. . . . It's an odd sensation, Julia.

MRS. MACARTNEY. What is?

GEORGIANA. Being worshipped. Adam worships me.

MRS. MACARTNEY. That's very evident.

GEORGIANA. I wonder what makes him?

MRS. MACARTNEY (*laughing and shrugging her shoulders*). Oh, my dear. . . .

GEORGIANA. Sometimes I've caught him looking at me as if I were the most wonderful thing in the world.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*lightly*). Well, so you are to him.

GEORGIANA. Yes. . . . I haven't seen him for a week now.

MRS. MACARTNEY. So he told me.

GEORGIANA. And I've had seven long letters

from him—one every morning. Seven enormously long letters, telling me, in seven different ways, how much he loves me.

MRS. MACARTNEY. How very sweet and attentive of him.

GEORGIANA. Very. . . . I've had to answer them.

(She walks restlessly to the window L. and pulls back the curtain.)

Nice cheerful weather you've brought down with you, Julia. *(Looks out.)*

MRS. MACARTNEY. Oh, I think the rain's stopping—the clouds seemed to be lifting as I came along. I do hope it will be fine to-morrow. *(Looks out of window over GEORGIANA'S shoulder.)*

GEORGIANA. I don't care much.

MRS. MACARTNEY *(sits in armchair L. of window)*. Oh, nonsense—of course you care. A fine day makes such a difference to a wedding. So you're going to the Italian Lakes—whereabouts?

GEORGIANA. Bellagio. *(Crosses behind her and sits at desk scribbling in an absent-minded way.)*

MRS. MACARTNEY. Perfect place—I envy you.

GEORGIANA. Do you? . . . We shall be away about a month. Then we shall come home and—settle down.

MRS. MACARTNEY. I hear you've found a charming little place.

GEORGIANA. Oh yes—very. You'll have to come and stay with us—Julia.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Of course I will, dear.

GEORGIANA. To see how the experiment works.

MRS. MACARTNEY. The experiment. . . .

GEORGIANA. Marriage!

MRS. MACARTNEY. Marriage is always an experiment, of course. But after all—in your case—though you haven't been engaged very long—

you've seen a good deal of Mr. Lankester, you ought to know him by this time. . . .

GEORGIANA. Oh yes, *I know him*. I should think I did—poor old boy. The question is. . . . (*She breaks off*) . . . What do you think of him, Julia?

MRS. MACARTNEY. I like him immensely—immensely.

GEORGIANA. So do I.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*laughing a little constrainedly*). Well, naturally—how quaint you are.

GEORGIANA. How did he look this afternoon—cheerful—or nervous?

MRS. MACARTNEY. Radiant—too happy for words.

GEORGIANA. His letters are delirious. I wonder what he thinks of mine. . . . How long does that sort of thing usually last, eh? (*Crosses to c., leans up against table.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. What sort of thing?

GEORGIANA. Infatuation.

MRS. MACARTNEY. What a question! How can one say—it all depends.

GEORGIANA (*suddenly*). I wish to goodness it was three o'clock to-morrow. (*Moves aimlessly to window.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. Three o'clock?

GEORGIANA. I shall be married.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Are you as impatient as all that?

GEORGIANA. I am. I want to get it over. It will be a relief to know it's too late, and I can't go back however much I want to—good Lord, what a relief it will be.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*disturbed*). Georgie—what do you mean?

(GEORGIANA *laughs shortly.*)

Georgie—surely you're not thinking—you're not going to do anything silly?

GEORGIANA. Oh dear no. I'm not going to do

anything silly. I'm going to do something very dishonest. I'm going to marry Adam. (*Crosses to table c.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY (*uncomfortably*). I don't understand what you're talking about.

GEORGIANA. Don't you? . . . Lying's dishonest, isn't it? . . . Poor old Julia—don't look so agonized. I assure you there's no need. My going-away coat is hanging over the back of that chair, and my wedding dress is upstairs, and I couldn't afford to draw back even if I had the pluck—which I haven't. Don't you worry. . . . you'll hear the familiar strains all right to-morrow. "Ra—ta—ta, ta, ta,—ta—ta—ta—ta, ta, ta,—ta—ta—ta—ta, ta, ta, ta—" (*Hums the "Wedding March" walking about.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY (*irritably*). Georgie, I do wish—

GEORGIANA (*interrupting*). Dear humbugging old tune! (*She hums the "Dead March" and then stops and goes into the "Wedding March" again.*) I always get muddled between the Chopin Funeral March and the Mendelssohn Wedding March. What a cad I shall feel when I hear it! But—after all—heaps of other women must have felt just the same when they trotted their proud husbands down the aisle—poor devils! Heaps and hundreds of 'em! Did you, when you were married?

MRS. MACARTNEY (*rising irritably*). I didn't—and I don't see any use in your saying this sort of thing to me.

GEORGIANA. More do I—I can't think why I do it. (*Moves to Mrs. MACARTNEY'S side.*) Perhaps it's intoxication—delight at having reached the crowning moment in a woman's life. Beautiful thought, isn't it? I've wanted a husband for years. Now I've got what I wanted. When you've got what you want, it doesn't do to be too particular as to how you've got it. Ta—ta—ta, ta, ta—ta—ta— (*She*

sits and leans back in her chair humming the "Wedding March" loudly.)

(MRS. MACARTNEY looks at her uncertainly and then makes a step as if to leave the room. Enter FOOTMAN.)

FOOTMAN. Mr. Lankester.

(Enter ADAM and goes straight to GEORGIANA L.)

(Exit FOOTMAN.)

GEORGIANA. Oh, there you are!

ADAM (*eagerly, without seeing MRS. MACARTNEY*). Yes, here I am.

GEORGIANA (*quickly*). You've seen Mrs. Macartney before to-day.

ADAM (*turning and seeing her*). Yes, we came down together from London.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Well, I think I'll leave you two dear people to talk over to-morrow's arrangements—I expect you've got lots to say to each other.

ADAM. Don't let us drive you away. (*Goes to door as he speaks and opens it.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. Oh, nonsense—besides, I want to unpack before the dressing bell rings. See you again at dinner.

(Exit MRS. MACARTNEY.)

(ADAM closes door behind her, then comes towards GEORGIANA.)

ADAM. Well, old girl!

GEORGIANA. Well!

ADAM. Tell me you've missed me!

GEORGIANA. Of course I have. . . . So you went down to Dorchester?

ADAM. Yes—ran down yesterday to have a last look at the house, and see how things were getting on.

GEORGIANA. And how are they getting on—all right?

(ADAM sits R. of table.)

ADAM. Oh, yes. Everything is still a bit unfinished, of course, and the painters are all over the place—but Phillips declares that it shall be all spick and span by the time Mrs. Lankester wants to come home. And what have you been doing with yourself all this time?

GEORGIANA. Oh, need you ask? Clothes, clothes, clothes—morning, noon and night. Nothing else—except acknowledge wedding presents. I hope you're in the habit of eating enormous quantities of toast.

ADAM. Why?

GEORGIANA. The ninth toast rack arrived yesterday.

ADAM. Excellent!

GEORGIANA. From Mrs. Maconochie. As she's not coming to the wedding, she won't see the other eight, so I've written to tell her it was just the very thing we wanted. Would you like to have a look at all the presents—they're on view in the morning-room? (*Rises and turns to him.*)

ADAM. No, not now. I can inspect the toast racks later on—I want to talk to you. I haven't seen you for a week.

GEORGIANA (*talking rapidly as if afraid of a pause*). How dreadful! You'll have too much of me soon, when I'm served up to you regularly with your breakfast, and dinner and tea.

ADAM. What a very unpoetical way of putting it.

GEORGIANA. I've always tried to impress on you that my views of life are not poetical.

ADAM (*going to her*). By this time to-morrow it will be all over, eh?

GEORGIANA. Thank goodness, yes. Rice and congratulations and the Voice that breathed o'er Eden—and we shall be on our way to London.

ADAM. Well on our way—we're due at St. Pancras at 6.45.

GEORGIANA. I am looking forward to seeing the Italian Lakes awfully . . . aren't you?

ADAM. Yes—with you.

GEORGIANA. Dorothy Collingbourne says they're simply heavenly. She was there in the Spring. *(Rises and crosses.)*

ADAM. Was she? . . . You're nervous this afternoon?

GEORGIANA. I—nervous?

ADAM. I can hear it in your voice.

GEORGIANA. Can you—oh well, one doesn't get married every day of the week. I suppose I am what you might call nervous.

ADAM *(gently)*. That doesn't mean you're afraid?

GEORGIANA *(with a constrained laugh)*. Afraid—of you?

ADAM. I didn't mean that exactly.

GEORGIANA *(interrupting him quickly)*. No, of course you didn't. I'm only fidgetty. You'd have the fidgets if you'd spent the last ten days having a trousseau tried on—linings fitted and pins stuck into your arms.

ADAM. Sounds unpleasant.

GEORGIANA. Mercifully that's all over, too. The last consignment of my wedding finery turned up a few minutes ago—it's hanging over the back of that chair.

ADAM. What is it?

GEORGIANA *(pointing)*. Those are the garments I shall carry you off in when the deed is done.

ADAM. They look very pretty. By the way *(feeling in his pocket)* I've brought you a little something to wear to-morrow—if you will.

GEORGIANA. Something to wear?

ADAM *(opening jewel case and showing necklace)*. I hope I've chosen what you like.

GEORGIANA *(in a low voice, coming to c. back of table)*. It's beautiful. You shouldn't have—you've given me so many presents.

ADAM. Let's see what it looks like on you. (*He fastens it round her neck and turns her to the glass.*) Now then—what?

GEORGIANA. It's beautiful. You are good!

ADAM (*with sudden vehemence*). Not half good enough for you, little girl . . . not half good enough. (*He puts his hand on her shoulder and looks into her eyes.*)

GEORGIANA (*shrinks from him a little, then tries to laugh*). I do so wish you wouldn't.

ADAM. Wouldn't what?

GEORGIANA. Talk like that—as if I were a sort of wingless angel. You make me almost frightened. (*Sits R. of table.*)

ADAM. Of what?

GEORGIANA. Of being found out. I'm not anything of the kind.

ADAM. Do you think I don't know that? (*Drags chair above her—c.*) I don't want you to be. You're good enough for me, just as you are—just Georgie! You'll wear that to-morrow, won't you? With your wedding dress?

GEORGIANA. Of course I shall. It will look lovely on the satin. I haven't thanked you for it half enough.

ADAM. Nonsense!

GEORGIANA. There's something else I ought to thank you for.

ADAM. Something else?

GEORGIANA. Yes. . . . Uncle Theodore was telling me—he says that you've been very good about—about settlements and things—

ADAM. Georgie, stop!

GEORGIANA. I want to thank you—

ADAM. No.

GEORGIANA. I ought to be grateful to you. It isn't every one who would have acted as you have done—when I'm bringing you nothing—

ADAM. Except yourself—is that nothing to me?

GEORGIANA. Oh, I know—still— (Coming L.C.)

ADAM. I'm sorry Sir Theodore has been saying that sort of thing to you.

(*She is silent. He rises and goes to her. He strokes her hair gently.*)

What a queer little woman you are.

GEORGIANA. Why?

ADAM. You're always trying to undervalue yourself.

GEORGIANA. Oh no.

ADAM (*laughing*). Oh yes. You seem to be most anxious to rub it into me what a shocking bad bargain I've made in the way of a wife. Well, it may be a shocking bad bargain, but it suits me. . . . Georgie, you'll never say that sort of thing again, will you—about money—or talk of being grateful?

GEORGIANA. Not if you don't like it.

ADAM. I don't—it hurts me.

GEORGIANA. Why?

ADAM. Because I feel as if I can't have made you understand what you've brought into my life—the happiness—I'm not good at saying what I mean—I'm a fool at explaining—but you do understand don't you? What you are to me?

GEORGIANA. Yes, I think I understand that.

ADAM. If you'd been a rich woman and I'd been a poor beggar without a sixpence I should have asked you to be my wife, just the same—because I want you—and I know that you would have given me just the same answer. Thank Heaven, I know that!

(*GEORGIANA is silent. Her head is bent so as not to meet his eyes.*)

There are only two things I want from you—your love and yourself. One you've given me already, and the other you're going to give me to-morrow . . . because you're going to be my wife to-morrow I wouldn't change places with any man alive. You

talk about being grateful to me—good Lord, it's just the other way round. God bless you . . . for your love. . . . (*He draws her towards him tenderly.*)

(*With a sudden stifled cry she thrusts him from her.*)

GEORGIANA. Don't, I can't let you.

ADAM. What is it? What's the matter?

GEORGIANA. Don't touch me—don't! Go away and leave me. I hate myself! (*She flings herself down, covering her face with her hands at table L.*)

ADAM (*bewildered*). Georgie—little woman—

GEORGIANA. I hate myself—I loathe myself! I've never loved you! I wish I were dead!

ADAM (*stands staring down at her for a moment, then*) Georgie dear—what is it? You're upset—overwrought. You don't know what you're saying—

GEORGIANA (*lifting up her head almost defiantly*). I do. I'm not going to marry you.

ADAM. You're not——

GEORGIANA. No. The wedding's off, our engagement's off—it was all a pretence from the beginning—a pretence—a sham—a farce——

ADAM. A farce——

GEORGIANA (*recklessly*). A disgusting farce! Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry—but you'd better know it now than when it's too late and you're tied to me for life. I didn't care twopence for you when I said I'd marry you ——

ADAM (*hoarsely*). I can't believe it—I won't—for God's sake——

GEORGIANA (*rises and crosses R. of table*). You must believe it—you've got to believe it. I'm not mad, I'm not joking—I'm not going to be your wife, and when I said I cared for you, I didn't. . . . There, now you know!

ADAM (*in a slow hoarse voice*). You—accepted me—without caring for me?

GEORGIANA. Yes, I did.

ADAM. Then when you told me you loved me, it was a lie?

GEORGIANA. Yes, it was a lie.

ADAM. You——(*fiercely*.) I see how it is (*sinking on chair L. of table*). There's some one else you've got to care for. Who is it? That's it—that's what it means.

GEORGIANA. It doesn't. There's no one else. There never has been.

ADAM. I don't believe you.

GEORGIANA. There is no one else. I accepted you just because there was no one else.

ADAM. You don't love any one else—and you don't love me—yet you——

GEORGIANA. For the simple reason that I wanted to get married—oh, can't you see?

ADAM (*with forced calmness*). I'm afraid I can't. You wanted to get married, you say?

GEORGIANA. Yes—to you or to any one—it didn't much matter. Just to get married.

ADAM. And now you've changed your mind?

GEORGIANA. Now I've changed my mind.

ADAM (*between his teeth*). May I ask why? (GEORGIANA is silent.) I suppose you have found out that you are happier as you are?

GEORGIANA. No, it's not that. I'm not at all happy as I am—I'm miserable.

ADAM. Then what is it? (*Moves above table, GEORGIANA below him.*)

GEORGIANA. Oh, don't be cruel.

ADAM. Cruel!

GEORGIANA (*with an outburst*). I'm ashamed of myself—I'm ashamed of myself.

ADAM (*slowly*). You ought to be ashamed of yourself—and what you've done. It's devilish—what you've done. You've lied—and deceived me. You've taken my life and broken it—in your cruel little fingers. You've done that. (*He thumps the table with his fists.*) Although you didn't care, I

cared ; you might have remembered that—you might have . . . I cared so much that if it would have given you any pleasure, I'd have lain down on the ground for you to walk over me ; you know that. (*His voice breaks.*)

GEORGIANA. Yes— I know——

ADAM. And your explanation—your excuse—is that you wanted to get married.

GEORGIANA. Yes.

ADAM. Then all I can say is that you might have thought of a better one. It's false on the face of it.

GEORGIANA (*bitterly*). That's all you understand about it.

ADAM. I understand because you've taught me to understand—that there are some women vain enough and little-minded enough to take a pleasure in humiliating the men who love them.

GEORGIANA. No, you're utterly wrong utterly—

ADAM (*cutting her short*). I understand that, though you had no use for my love you had plenty of use for my admiration.

GEORGIANA. That's not true. (*Rises indignantly.*)

ADAM. I understand that you wanted to say that you could have been my wife if you had chosen if you hadn't preferred to make a fool of me— throw me over—

GEORGIANA. No—

ADAM (*without noticing her interruption*). Well, it's true. You can say, with perfect truth, that you've made a fool of a man who thought nothing was too good for you— nothing ! But, when you say it, you can remember that to me a woman as vain as you are seems the most pitiful thing alive.

GEORGIANA. Oh, it wasn't that—it wasn't vanity. How dare you say so ?

ADAM. I dare say it simply because it is the truth.

GEORGIANA. It's not—it's very far from the truth. Oh, I wonder how a man can be so stupid ! (*Crosses L.*)

ADAM. Stupid?

GEORGIANA. Yes, I've wondered it all along—it amazes me. (*Coming back L.C.*) Are all good men as dense as you are? Couldn't you see—hadn't you the sense to see how it was?

ADAM (*grimly*). I'm afraid I hadn't—and I'm afraid I haven't now.

GEORGIANA (*defiantly*). If you hadn't been so much in love with me you'd have seen through me months ago.

ADAM. No doubt.

GEORGIANA. If you want to know why I promised to marry you, it's because I'm a perfectly useless woman. (*Sits at table L.*) And what is a perfectly useless woman to do but marry?

ADAM (*scornfully*). Even when she does not care for the man who asks her?

GEORGIANA. Even when she does not care for the man who asks her.

ADAM. I'm afraid I don't agree with you.

GEORGIANA. Of course you don't . . . you have no imagination.

ADAM. No, I suppose not!

GEORGIANA. Oh, I can't help it—it's true. You have no imagination—but perhaps it's too much to expect you to have any. You're a man and you've got your life in your own hands, to do what you like with and make what you want of it.

ADAM. We can every one of us make what we like of our own lives.

GEORGIANA. So you think—Oh, for Heaven's sake don't talk copy-book to me. Do you think that if I had had my life to do as I liked with—if I had been able to choose and free to choose—do you think that I should have led you on and lied to you just for the fun of the thing? Do you really think that I humbugged you and degraded myself because I liked it? You *can't* think it! Why, I tell you that night—the night you asked me to be your wife, when

you took me in your arms—the first time you kissed me—I was sick with shame—sick!

ADAM. Then why—in Heaven's name, why——
(*R. up stage.*)

GEORGIANA. I've told you why already, but you won't believe it. Because I wanted to get married—because my relations wanted to get me married. Because every woman is expected to get herself a husband, somehow or another, and is looked on as a miserable failure if she doesn't. . . . So I said "yes" to the first man who asked me. If you had been any one else I should have said "yes" just the same.

ADAM. Thank you.

GEORGIANA. Oh, you needn't think you'd have acted differently if you'd been in my shoes. You don't know what it is—you don't know. . . . I'm no use to any one, I'm no particular use to myself. I've got to be kept by somebody and you've got enough money to keep me. So I said I'd have you.

ADAM (*ironically*). Looking upon me simply as a means of livelihood.

GEORGIANA. Well, I've got to have some means of livelihood, haven't I? . . . Oh, how glad you ought to be that you're a man!

(*There is a pause.*)

ADAM. What has induced you to change your mind at the last moment?

GEORGIANA (*hesitates—then in a low voice*). You have.

ADAM. I——?

GEORGIANA. Yes.

ADAM. You mean that, on due reflection, you found it impossible to put up with me—even for the sake of getting married?

GEORGIANA (*brokenly*). Oh, don't—it wasn't——

ADAM. Then what——? (*Sitting R. of table.*)

GEORGIANA. It's because you have been so good to me—

ADAM. What do you mean?

GEORGIANA. It's only since we've been engaged, that I've found out all it meant to you. I didn't realize at first what it would be to take everything from you—your love and your money and your gentleness—and give you nothing in return—nothing. It was so mean—it was cheating you. . . . If you had been any one else, I suppose I should have gone on with it . . . but you! I'd got to like you so much—so very much—and I was sorry for you—oh, I was sorry. It was such a shame. . . .

(She breaks down and sobs helplessly. ADAM stands looking down at her.)

ADAM. You were sorry for me?

GEORGIANA *(drying her eyes)*. You despise me now, I know—you've got every right to despise me—but if you understood it all I don't think you would feel quite like that—I don't indeed. It was such a horrible temptation.

ADAM. A temptation?

GEORGIANA. To say yes.

ADAM. Even though you didn't care——?

GEORGIANA. I've nothing to look forward to if I don't marry—and you don't know what it is to feel that nobody wants you—that you're rather in the way and that even if people are kind to you, they'd be only too thankful to get rid of you—and not to be clever enough to do anything for yourself. . . . You must see that it's hard. *(She rises.)*

ADAM. Yes, I see that.

GEORGIANA *(goes up to window and stands there a short time)*. And then, if you haven't married, you've failed. There's nothing else—and people look down on you. And as you get older there's no one to care about you—and you just don't matter. It's so dull and miserable—no sort of a future. I dread it so. . . . And I did so want to have a home of my

own, and be some one—not only Aunt Catherine's poor relation. That tempted me.

ADAM. I see.

GEORGIANA. Then I'm not one of the women who wear particularly well. I'm getting to look my age—there are a lot of horrid little lines coming round the corners of my eyes.

ADAM. I've never noticed them.

GEORGIANA. Poor relations don't count for much even when they're nice looking ; but when they're old and ugly—well, they oughtn't to be allowed to get old and ugly. It would be ever so much more merciful to take 'em to the Dogs' Home and smother 'em painlessly.

ADAM. Don't talk like that.

GEORGIANA. I wish I'd been put into a lethal chamber and smothered before I met you and made you miserable.

ADAM. Georgie !

GEORGIANA (*interrupting him*). Oh, I know I've been a toad to you—an utter toad. But there was some excuse for me, and if I'd done what was best for myself, I should have married you to-morrow. But I've tried to do the straight thing by you—and it's just because I've tried to do the straight thing that you despise me and look down on me.

ADAM. You're mistaken—I don't.

GEORGIANA. Oh yes, you do. You told me just now that I was the most pitiful thing alive.

ADAM. I am sorry I said that. I beg your pardon.

GEORGIANA (*after a slight pause—tremulously*). Thank you. . . . You do see how it is then ? (*Goes to L. of table.*)

ADAM. Yes.

GEORGIANA. That it is for your sake I have told you—not for mine ?

ADAM. Yes.

GEORGIANA. But you hate me—you must hate me ? (*Sits L. of table.*)

ADAM. I don't see that I have any right to hate you.

GEORGIANA. Oh yes, you have. I've tried to— to make amends—now. But I led you on in the first place, though you never seemed to see it. I ran after you—threw myself at your head.

ADAM (*sharply*). I won't hear you say such things about yourself.

GEORGIANA (*she rises*). All right—I won't. All the same, they're true—unfortunately. I'd give a good deal if they weren't—and I'd give a good deal if I hadn't—hurt you. . . . I know I have hurt you—awfully.

ADAM. Don't.

(*There is a silence—ADAM moves slowly towards the door.*)

GEORGIANA. You're going?

ADAM. There's nothing to keep me here any longer.

GEORGIANA. Are you going away—right away, I mean?

ADAM. I suppose so. Yes, of course, I'm going away at once. (*He turns to go.*)

GEORGIANA. Adam!

ADAM. Yes.

GEORGIANA (*stretching out her hand*). Won't you say good-bye to me?

ADAM (*from the door*). Good-bye. (*Then he comes and takes her hand.*)

GEORGIANA (*holding his hand—brokenly*). I'm sorry—I'm sorry. (*She sits at the table.*)

ADAM (*trying to draw it away from her*). Please—

GEORGIANA (*still holding it and sobbing*). And you were so happy when you came here—when you were talking about the house—you looked so happy.

ADAM (*huskily*). Don't—

(*He strides across the room without looking back at her and exits.*)

(GEORGIANA sits crying—then dries her eyes—and starts and turns her back to the door as TOD GRAYLE enters through the window.)

TOD. Hallo—where's Lankester?

GEORGIANA. Gone.

TOD. He's coming back to dinner, I suppose?

GEORGIANA. No, he's not. He has gone away.

TOD. Gone away. I say (*coming round and looking at her*) is anything up? You've been crying. You've not been having a row?

GEORGIANA. You may just as well know at once that my engagement with Mr. Lankester is at an end. (*She rises and goes to desk.*)

TOD. At an end! (*Incredulously.*) Do you mean to say that there isn't going to be any wedding to-morrow?

GEORGIANA. Yes.

TOD. I say, old girl. . . . (*Whistles.*) The cad's chucked you—then—what a rotten shame!

GEORGIANA. He's not a cad and he hasn't chucked me; but we're not going to be married.

TOD. He hasn't chucked you—then you must have chucked him?

(GEORGIANA is silent.)

Great Scott, Georgie, what in the name of blazes did you do it for?

(GEORGIANA wipes her eyes and sniffs.)

You don't seem to be particularly happy now you have given him the push.

GEORGIANA. I never said I was happy, did I? (*Sitting at desk.*)

TOD. I say, does the mater know? (*Crossing to front of desk.*)

GEORGIANA. No, I want *you* to tell Aunt Catherine that my engagement's broken off—now.

TOD. Me?—much obliged.

GEORGIANA. You might——

TOD. Thanks. When the mater's on the war-path I prefer to make myself scarce.

GEORGIANA. She wouldn't be angry with you. I don't feel I can. . . . I'm awfully miserable, Tod, and I don't often ask you to do anything for me.

TOD (*touched—gruffly*). Oh, all right.

GEORGIANA (*rising*). Thank you, Tod.

TOD. If you take my advice you'll keep out of the mater's way till she's simmered down a bit.

GEORGIANA. Yes—I'm going up to my room.

(*Exit R. with handkerchief to her eyes.*)

(TOD looks after, whistles thoughtfully and turns towards door L. Before he reaches it, enter SIR THEODORE.)

TOD. Hallo, Dad, I was just coming to look for you and the mater.

SIR THEODORE. Were you? What for?

TOD. I've got something to tell you.

SIR THEODORE. Well?

TOD. It's a bit of a staggerer.

SIR THEODORE. What do you mean? (*Sits at table.*)

TOD. Well, it's about Georgie. The wedding's off.

SIR THEODORE. Off?

TOD (*nods*). She's given Lankester the push.

SIR THEODORE (*irritably*). My dear boy, what nonsense are you talking?

TOD. It's not nonsense. Lankester's gone. No error—he's got the hoof.

SIR THEODORE (*stares at him incredulously—then*) Do you mean to tell me that Georgie has broken off her engagement?

TOD. You've hit it.

SIR THEODORE (*angrily*). If this is one of your idiotic jokes——

TOD. It isn't.

SIR THEODORE (*after a pause, helplessly*). But what on earth——?

TOD. Ask me another.

SIR THEODORE. But what did she say—what explanation did she give?

TOD. She only said she'd chucked him and didn't give any explanation.

SIR THEODORE. Perhaps she was only joking?

TOD. She didn't look much like it. Her eyes were all bunged up and her nose was bright pink.

SIR THEODORE. But what an extraordinary—what an altogether——

TOD. It is a bit of a staggerer, isn't it?

SIR THEODORE (R.C.). Does your mother know?

TOD (L.C.). Not yet. Georgie asked me to——

(*Enter LADY CATHERINE R.*)

LADY CATHERINE. I thought Georgie and Adam were here—I want them to—— (*Breaks off and looks from one to the other—above table C.*) Is anything the matter?

SIR THEODORE. I'm afraid there is.

(*TOD goes to the desk.*)

LADY CATHERINE. What?

SIR THEODORE. The—the most astounding thing has happened.

LADY CATHERINE. What is it?

SIR THEODORE. Georgiana has broken off her engagement.

LADY CATHERINE. Georgiana has. . . . Nonsense!

SIR THEODORE. My dear, I'm afraid it's true.

LADY CATHERINE. Who told you?

SIR THEODORE. Tod.

LADY CATHERINE. And who told you? (*Over to desk to TOD.*)

TOD. Georgie!

LADY CATHERINE. Where is Georgie?

TOD. I—she—— (*Hesitates.*)

LADY CATHERINE. Where is Georgie?

TOD. I think she said she was going to her room.

LADY CATHERINE. Ring the bell, please.

(TOD *does so*. LADY CATHERINE *sits chair L. A momentary pause, then enter FOOTMAN.*)

Send up to Miss Vicary's room, please, and ask her to come down and speak to me at once.

(*Exit FOOTMAN.*)

(SIR THEODORE *moves towards door R.*)

You're not going, Theodore?

SIR THEODORE (*uneasily*). I thought—you might prefer—

LADY CATHERINE. I should prefer you to remain.

(SIR THEODORE *sighs heavily and bringing chair alongside sits—a slight pause.*)

TOD (*at desk L.*). I say, mater, I think she's rather low about it—down on her luck, you know, and——

LADY CATHERINE (*coldly*). Indeed.

(*Another pause. Then enter GEORGINA. She looks round with a sort of nervous defiance, hesitates and then speaks.*)

GEORGINA. You sent for me, Aunt Catherine?
(*She comes C.*)

LADY CATHERINE. I sent for you to hear what you have to say with regard to an extraordinary—an incredible statement—

GEORGINA. Tod has told you then?

(*There is some business between TOD and SIR THEODORE.*)

LADY CATHERINE. And am I to understand that that statement is true?

GEORGINA (*nervously*). Yes. . . . Aunt Catherine——

LADY CATHERINE. That without informing any

one—without consulting any one you have broken off your engagement at the last moment?

GEORGIANA (*in a low voice and without looking at her*). Yes. I have told Mr. Lankester that I can't marry him—because—— (*She hesitates and breaks off.*)

LADY CATHERINE. Then allow me to inform you that it is the most outrageous—the most disgraceful thing I have ever heard of—the most outrageous thing.

GEORGIANA (*bitterly*). That's just what I expected from you. (*Going R.*)

LADY CATHERINE. Georgiana!

SIR THEODORE (*hastily*). Georgie—Georgie—surely that isn't quite the tone to adopt to your aunt. (*Comes R.*) You have done a most unusual—a most extraordinary thing. Surely you must see that your conduct needs explanation.

(*TOD is now down L.*)

GEORGIANA. Aunt Catherine didn't ask me for an explanation. She just rounded on me straight off without trying to find out whether I was right or wrong.

LADY CATHERINE. You're very much mistaken.

GEORGIANA. Oh no, I'm not.

LADY CATHERINE. Georgiana—you are impertinent.

GEORGIANA (*bitterly*). All that matters to you is that I've thrown Mr. Lankester over. My reasons for doing so don't matter in the very least.

(*From behind LADY CATHERINE'S chair TOD makes signs to her to be quiet.*)

Well, I have thrown him over and you've got me back on your hands again. I'm very sorry for you and I'm very sorry for myself, but now the thing's done it's no good bullying me. (*She makes towards the door R.*)

SIR THEODORE (*scandalized*). Georgie!

GEORGIANA. No, it isn't, Uncle Theodore—and it's not a bit of good your waving your hands and making faces at me, Tod. If I'm bullied I shall say what I like back.

LADY CATHERINE. Tod, don't stand behind my chair.

(TOD *moves away sheepishly to desk*.)

If this is a specimen of your temper, Georgiana, I can only say that Mr. Lankester is to be congratulated on a fortunate escape.

TOD (*protestingly*). Oh, I say, Mater—draw it mild. (*Coming to* LADY CATHERINE.)

LADY CATHERINE. Tod —

GEORGIANA. I quite agree with Aunt Catherine. Mr. Lankester has had a very fortunate escape.

LADY CATHERINE. You've treated him abominably.

GEORGIANA. I know that.

LADY CATHERINE. To throw him over on the very day before the wedding—it's worse than an insult.

GEORGIANA. It was the best thing I could do for him, considering I never cared for him.

LADY CATHERINE. Then you should never have accepted him.

GEORGIANA. I know that, too—and so do you—you've known it all along.

LADY CATHERINE. What do you mean?

GEORGIANA. You've known all along that I wasn't in love with him.

LADY CATHERINE. I've known——

GEORGIANA. Of course you have. I've never pretended to be in love with him—to you. And you didn't care whether I was or not.

SIR THEODORE. Really—really—when a woman accepts a man one naturally takes it for granted——

GEORGIANA. There are lots of reasons for accepting a man. One of them's being in love with him—

one of them. That wasn't my reason for accepting Mr. Lankester—and I told him so to-night.

LADY CATHERINE. You told him so!

GEORGIANA. Yes. I've done the best thing I ever did in my life—and I suppose I shall regret it as long as I live.

(She sits. Her voice suddenly breaks and she leans on the arm of her chair and sobs. There is a short silence. SIR THEODORE shuffles uncomfortably; LADY CATHERINE watches GEORGIANA grimly; TOD stares fixedly away from her.)

LADY CATHERINE. I am glad that you seem to realize the unutterable folly of which you have been guilty.

TOD *(under his breath)*. Oh, dry up!

LADY CATHERINE. Tod—did you speak?

GEORGIANA *(drying her eyes—to LADY CATHERINE)*. Yes, I do realize it. I've thrown away my last chance.

LADY CATHERINE *(sarcastically)*. It's just as well to make up your mind to that. After the way you have treated one man you can hardly expect —

GEORGIANA. I don't. I've tried to be honest and I must take the consequences. They're certain to be unpleasant.

SIR THEODORE *(irritably)*. My dear Georgiana, I feel bound to say that it's a pity your—er—sense of honesty, as you call it, did not develop itself before the—er—eleventh hour.

LADY CATHERINE. A great pity.

SIR THEODORE. It would have saved you from making yourself er—

LADY CATHERINE. Ridiculous.

SIR THEODORE *(hastily)*. Conspicuous was the word I was thinking of—conspicuous—and it would have saved us all from a great deal of annoyance—a great deal of annoyance. What are we to say to people?

LADY CATHERINE. Exactly.

SIR THEODORE. Your Aunt Constantia and the Montgomerys will be here directly. What explanations are we to give to them—to everybody?

GEORGIANA. Whatever you like. I don't care. Tell them I'm a fool and have done with it.

(LADY CATHERINE snorts meaningly.)

Yes, you're quite right, you won't be far out. They'll all side with you, of course, and set to work to make my life miserable. They'll all think just as you do—that I ought to have taken Adam in and done for him. And they'll all talk just as you do—as if marriage was nothing more than wearing a ring on your third finger and sitting opposite a man at table. Between you and Aunt Constantia and the Montgomerys I shall soon be wishing myself dead.

LADY CATHERINE. I am obliged to you, Georgiana. I am sure your uncle is obliged to you. Your courtesy and your gratitude are all we could desire in a girl whom we have treated as our own daughter—whom we only wished to see happily settled in life.

GEORGIANA. In other words, married to any man who could be got to take her.

LADY CATHERINE. You are quite mistaken if you think you mend your case by insolence and coarseness. You have behaved towards us with a gross want of consideration. You have placed us in a most painful position.

SIR THEODORE. That's perfectly true. What we are to say to every one I don't know—I really don't.

LADY CATHERINE (*sarcastically*). And it may have escaped your notice, of course, but we have incurred a good deal of expense on your account of late. Quite a small matter to you, no doubt, but, considering that we have other and very heavy calls upon us—

GEORGIANA. I wish to God you'd turned me out to earn my own living years ago.

LADY CATHERINE (*shocked*). Georgiana!

GEORGIANA. Why didn't you?

LADY CATHERINE. Is this your gratitude for——

GEORGIANA. No, it isn't. It's ingratitude—it's anything you like. But, whatever it is, you've got yourself to thank for it. Why didn't you make something of me—something, and not just a helpless incapable. That's what I am—an incapable—thanks to you. What can I do—nothing, except dress myself and put my hair in pins at night and keep my eyes open for a likely husband. That's what I've been doing for years—ever since I came out—and you've been hawking me round for years to one man after another. That's been my life—being hawked round—till I got desperate and you got desperate and Adam came along.

SIR THEODORE. God bless my soul—what——

LADY CATHERINE. Let her go on, Theodore.

GEORGIANA. Oh no, I'm not going on—I'm going away.

LADY CATHERINE.	} Going away?
SIR THEODORE.	
TOD.	

GEORGIANA. Yes—now, at once. I've had about enough of it. This sort of thing is only the beginning. I know quite well what you'll all be like when you get together. You and Aunt Constantia and the Montgomerys. I'm not going to stop here and be groaned over by an entire family. I couldn't stand it—between you you'd drive me mad.

LADY CATHERINE. Don't talk rubbish.

GEORGIANA. It's not rubbish though it may sound like it. I'm going to London by the next train.

SIR THEODORE. To London?

GEORGIANA. To Frances Melliship. She asked me once to live with her and stand on my own feet. That's what I'm going to do now, and I wish to goodness I'd done it before. And I'll never cost you another penny that I can help.

LADY CATHERINE. Georgiana, I think you are out of your senses. I forbid you to do anything so ridiculous——

GEORGIANA. It's not a bit of good your forbidding me. I shall walk to the train and get in.

(A bell rings loudly off.)

TOD. Aunt Constantia and the Montgomerys.

GEORGIANA. Then I'm off. Aunt Constantia on the top of Aunt Catherine would be more than flesh and blood could bear. You can send my things after me.

LADY CATHERINE. I never heard——

GEORGIANA *(snatching up coat from chair and putting it on)*. This will do for to-night—my going-away coat. It's got to be paid for, so I may as well wear it. Where's the hat? *(Pinning it on.)* Sorry you'll have to entertain my wedding party without me, but——

(Enter FOOTMAN L.)

FOOTMAN. Lady Constantia Ferrers—Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery—Miss Montgomery—Miss Hilda Montgomery——

GEORGIANA. Oh, Lord. . . .

(Exit hurriedly R. as—)

(LADY CONSTANTIA and the MONTGOMERYS appear in doorway L.)

CURTAIN.

ACT III

SCENE.—*The general waiting-room at Puckridge railway station. The usual bare, square room, a plan of which will be found at the end of the play. A fire is burning dimly. Over mantelpiece a looking-glass. The door at the back opens to the platform.*

(As the curtain rises the stage is empty. Then enter DOBBINS, an elderly railway porter, followed by GEORGIANA. GEORGIANA wears the same clothes as in the previous act, but her long cloak is splashed and caked with mud, and the feathers in her hat are out of curl and soaked with rain. Her whole manner shows extreme depression and her eyes are red with crying.)

DOBBINS. 'Ere you are, miss, 'ere you are. Set you down and dry yourself. I'll make up the fire for you in no time.

GEORGIANA. Thank you, Dobbins. *(She sits at fire.)*

DOBBINS *(poking fire)*. And 'ow on earth did you come to be out in all the rain? Without an umbrella, too?

GEORGIANA. Oh—the rain came on after I'd started.

DOBBINS. That's better—we'll 'ave a blaze in no time. If I was you, miss, I'd 'ang my coat over the back of a chair—you'll get your death if you sit in it sopping wet like that. And 'ow about gettin' a fly to take you back? Shall I run over to the *Raven*?

GEORGIANA. Oh—no, thank you.

DOBBINS. You're never thinking of walking back to the 'All.

GEORGIANA (*embarrassed*). Oh no—of course not. But—there's no hurry. I think I'll dry myself first.

DOBBINS. Right you are, miss—right you are. It 'ud never do for you to be laid up with a cold in the 'ead to-morrow, would it? Let me see—to-morrow is the 'appy day, isn't it, miss?

GEORGIANA. Er—yes.

DOBBINS. O' course. Mr. Smith was tellin' me he'd reserved you a first on the 4.5.

GEORGIANA. Oh—has he?

DOBBINS. I see Mr. Lankester come down this afternoon.

GEORGIANA (*hastily*). How long is it before the London train is due?

DOBBINS. The up train?

GEORGIANA. Yes.

DOBBINS. She's due in about fourteen minutes now, but as likely as not she'll be a bit be'ind time. . . . Expecting any one by 'er, miss?

GEORGIANA. No—yes. That's to say I daresay there'll be a parcel.

DOBBINS. Very good, miss. I'll look out for it and bring it along. What sort of a parcel, miss?

GEORGIANA (*impatently*). Oh, I don't know—a brown paper parcel tied with string.

DOBBINS. Very good, miss.

GEORGIANA. Don't bother about the fire—any longer—it'll burn all right. (*She gives him a tip.*)

DOBBINS. Thank'ee, miss. I'll bring it along—a brown paper parcel tied with string.

(*Exit DOBBINS.*)

(*GEORGIANA takes off her coat, tries to brush some of the mud off it and then hangs it on a chair in front of the fire. She removes her hat, shakes and attempts to re-arrange the damp feathers, and finally sets it in the fender to dry. Every now and then she*

stops to sniff and wipe her eyes. She looks at herself in the glass, and tries to smooth her hair with her side-comb. While she is doing so, her eye is caught by ADAM'S necklace, which she still wears. She takes it off slowly and reluctantly, and puts it in her pocket; same BUS. with her engagement ring. Finally she wipes her eyes and sits in a depressed attitude staring at the fire. The door is suddenly flung open, showing BERTHA in the doorway.)

BERTHA. There you are. (*Calling off.*) Hi, Dobbins! just tell the lady in the carriage it's all right.

GEORGIANA. Bertha!

BERTHA (*coming down—giggling*). Hullo!

GEORGIANA (*angrily*). What do you want?

BERTHA. You—of course.

GEORGIANA. Oh, do you—and what do you want me for?

BERTHA. To take you home. Mother sent us to fetch you.

GEORGIANA. Did she? And who's us?

BERTHA. Me and Julia.

GEORGIANA (*turning her back on her*). Well, you and Julia can go home and say I'm not coming.

BERTHA (*loftily*). Don't be silly. (*Coming up to her.*) Aunt Constantia says you deserve to be shaken and put to bed. I must say I rather agree with her.

GEORGIANA. You'll be shaken yourself if you don't clear out.

BERTHA (*giggling*). I say, Georgie, you do look a sight. What have you been doing with yourself?

(*As GEORGIANA starts up angrily, enter MRS. MACARTNEY.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY (*crossly*). Thank goodness. Be quick and put your things on. The carriage is waiting—we can't keep it standing in all this rain. Come along. (*She comes to the fire.*)

BERTHA. She says she's not coming.

GEORGIANA. No, I'm not. I'm sorry you've had all your trouble for nothing.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*coldly*). Please don't be foolish, Georgie. Of course you are going home with us. Lady Catherine insists—

GEORGIANA. Then you can tell her I refuse.

BERTHA (*primly*). What do you suppose people will say?

GEORGIANA. Oh, shut up!

MRS. MACARTNEY. Georgie, of all the hopeless idiots I ever met you are the worst.

GEORGIANA. Am I?

MRS. MACARTNEY (*crossing to L.C. between table and fire*). Bertha is perfectly right. You've made quite enough sensation for one day—throwing Mr. Lankester over on the very night before your wedding. You surely don't want to make any more by quarrelling with your relations and rushing out of the house like a lunatic. What on earth do you imagine that people will think of you?

GEORGIANA. Everything that's odious. I can't help that.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Oh, nonsense, you can help it—at least you can help a great deal of it.

BERTHA. Aunt Constantia says that no one will believe for a moment that you threw *him* over—

MRS. MACARTNEY (*hastily*). That'll do, Bertha. Now come along, Georgie, put on your— Good gracious, is this your coat? (*Takes coat.*)

GEORGIANA. I didn't bring an umbrella. (*She sits c.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY (*looking at coat*). So it seems; but was that why you sat down in the road?

GEORGIANA. I didn't sit down in the road. It was dark and I walked into a ditch.

BERTHA (*giggling*). I wish I'd seen you. You must have looked funny.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*throwing coat on bench*). Bertha,

be quiet. . . . Well, you won't be able to wear it any more, so the best thing we can do is to leave it here. There are plenty of rugs in the brougham.

GEORGIANA (*rising*). How many times have I got to tell you that I'm not going back with you?

MRS. MACARTNEY (*taking her arm*). Oh, nonsense.

GEORGIANA (*shaking her off*). Leave me alone, Julia.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Georgie! (*Crosses L. by fire.*)

BERTHA. Aunt Constantia said she knew we should have a lot of trouble with her.

GEORGIANA. You hateful little beast. (*Smacks BERTHA'S face.*)

BERTHA. Oh!

MRS. MACARTNEY. Georgie!

BERTHA. I shall tell mother.

GEORGIANA. If you say another word, I'll do it again.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Bertha, don't talk to her—go and wait in the carriage. (*She goes to door, pushing BERTHA out.*)

BERTHA (*under her breath*). Cat! (*Turning as she opens door.*) I expect Aunt Constantia was perfectly right and it was Adam who threw you over.

(*Exit hastily.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. Georgie, I didn't know you could be so vicious.

GEORGIANA. I'm not vicious—I'm miserable. (*Buries her face in her hands, sitting on the bench.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. Well, I'm sorry, but after all, it's your own fault.

GEORGIANA. Oh yes.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*sitting on her R.*). And you don't imagine you're going to make things any better by running away and sulking in this perfectly childish fashion. That's the only possible way to describe your behaviour—it's perfectly childish. Upon my word, Georgie, you ought to be thoroughly

well beaten. I'm not at all sure that I shouldn't like to beat you myself.

GEORGIANA. And I'm quite sure that Aunt Catherine would—and Aunt Constantia. That's one of the reasons why I'm not coming back with you.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Oh, stuff and nonsense. As I said just now, I'm very sorry for you.

GEORGIANA. Thank you, but I shouldn't have guessed it if you hadn't told me.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Oh well - it's difficult to have any patience with you. You've been such a fool.

GEORGIANA (*bitterly*). Tell me something I don't know.

MRS. MACARTNEY. What on earth induced you to be so rude to Lady Catherine?

GEORGIANA. She was rude to me.

MRS. MACARTNEY. That's quite a different thing. Well, you'll have to eat humble pie and apologise to her some time or another, so why not get the operation over and have done with it at once?

GEORGIANA. Because I won't.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*impatiently*). I really had no idea you were so amazingly silly. What in the world do you suppose you are going to do if you don't come back?

GEORGIANA. I'm going to London.

MRS. MACARTNEY. To Miss Melliship?

GEORGIANA. Yes. She's the only person who'll understand— who'll think I've done right.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Very likely. She has most extraordinary ideas. No doubt she'll welcome you with open arms and cook you a sausage on a smelly oil stove. You seem to have got over your former dislike to her peculiar methods of housekeeping.

GEORGIANA. I haven't at all; but I'd a hundred times rather be Frances than I'd be myself. She doesn't have to cadge round for a man to keep her.

MRS. MACARTNEY. My dear, you aren't Frances and you are yourself, which makes all the difference.

She's used to pigging it in a three pair back on a pound a week—you're not.

GEORGIANA. I could get used to it.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*laughing scornfully*). You'd loathe it—simply loathe it.

GEORGIANA. Do you think I don't know that? But I should loathe being at home a great deal more. It's a choice of evils.

MRS. MACARTNEY. My good child, I don't think it is a choice.

GEORGIANA. What do you mean?

MRS. MACARTNEY. Lady Catherine doesn't ask you to return home—she insists upon it. And when she says she insists, I think she means it. She declares that your flying off like this will make a regular scandal. And she's right—it will. And if she takes that view of the case, she will get her own way in the end by the very simple process of stopping supplies.

GEORGIANA. She won't—she can't. —

MRS. MACARTNEY. You know she can and—I *think* she will. . . . And then where will you be? You don't propose to throw yourself upon Miss Melliship's charity, do you?

GEORGIANA. I don't propose to do anything of the sort.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Then what——?

GEORGIANA. I suppose I can do like other people.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Like other people?

GEORGIANA. Well—work.

MRS. MACARTNEY. My dear sweet child, I do really believe that you must have taken leave of your senses. Now what could you do in the way of work—what could you?

GEORGIANA (*stubbornly but uncasily*). I don't know yet.

MRS. MACARTNEY. You're surely not going to pretend to teach other people's children things you don't know yourself?

GEORGIANA. No, I shan't do that because I'm not fit for it. For one thing, I've forgotten how to do sums. (*She goes and sits in chair up stage.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. Then may I ask what you are fit for?

GEORGIANA. I tell you I don't know yet; I haven't thought. Please go away, Julia, and leave me alone.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Certainly not. (*Sits opposite her—back to audience.*) I've no intention of leaving you alone till I've handed you over to Lady Catherine.

GEORGIANA. I will not----

MRS. MACARTNEY. Oh yes, you will. I can hear you will. You're coming round. (*Up to GEORGIANA and her hand on her shoulder.*)

GEORGIANA. I'm not.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Oh, nonsense! You've still got a grain or two of sense—left—somewhere. You know just as well as I do that all this idea of independence is ridiculous—for you. Our sort of woman can't be independent—we aren't brought up to be——

GEORGIANA (*bitterly*). No, we're brought up to be married.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Well, that's very much nicer. (*Turning a little to the audience.*)

GEORGIANA. Think so?

MRS. MACARTNEY. Because you've done one very silly thing in throwing over a man who would have made you an excellent husband, there's no need for you to do another very silly thing by flying in the face of all your family. (*Standing now at fireplace.*) And, as I told you, if you don't eat your humble pie now, you'll have to eat it presently—next week or the week after.

(*GEORGIANA is silent but moves uneasily.*)

I know it won't be pleasant; but that's all the more reason to get it over quickly.

GEORGIANA (*irresolutely*). If only Aunt Constantia wasn't there. She can be so—so supremely odious when she likes. And she and Aunt Catherine will egg each other on. I know they'll simply trample on me—the pair of them.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Well, the wisest thing you can do is to lie down and let them trample . . . and, after all, you know you thoroughly deserve it.

GEORGIANA. That won't make it any more enjoyable.

MRS. MACARTNEY (*briskly*). Now be quick and make up your mind to it. Hopkins will be furious with us for keeping the horses in the rain all this time.

GEORGIANA. I don't feel as if I can, Julia. (*Crosses to R.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY (*stopping her*). Oh, stop shillyshallying and come along.

GEORGIANA. What did Aunt Constantia say when she heard about it?

MRS. MACARTNEY. I don't know. I wasn't there. Here's your hat. (*Picks it up from fender.*) Heavens, what a state it's in! How could you have been so insane as to trudge all those miles in this weather.

GEORGIANA. If only there wasn't such a herd of them there—such a gang. It's so awful to think of meeting them all.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Perhaps you won't meet them all. Would you like my puff?

GEORGIANA. Thank you. (*Puffing her face.*) Had any one else arrived before you started?

MRS. MACARTNEY. Only the Felix Mundays. Put on your hat.

(*GEORGIANA puts it on slowly and reluctantly in front of the glass over the mantelpiece. One of the feathers droops right over her nose. She stands looking at herself in the glass.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. That's all right. Come along. (*She crosses.*)

GEORGIANA (*suddenly*). It's not all right and I won't come. (*Her back to the fireplace.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. What do you mean? (*Coming back to her.*)

GEORGIANA. Do you think I'm going home like that—to meet them all looking as if I'd just been dragged through a hedge backwards!

MRS. MACARTNEY. Well, take off your hat, dear child. You don't want it—we're going in the brougham.

GEORGIANA. You are—I'm not.

(*She flings herself into a chair, snatches off her hat and throws it across the room.*)

MRS. MACARTNEY. Why——

GEORGIANA. Why? Just look at my hair—just look at it. And my nose is scarlet and my eyes half shut, and my face all pasty, and I look a wreck. That's what I am—a wreck. Do you think I'm going to face the whole gang—like this? (*Seizes a loose strand of damp hair and pulls it down over her nose.*) Why, I shouldn't have the heart to say boo to a goose!

MRS. MACARTNEY. Don't be silly. As if any one would expect you to be looking your best after trudging five miles in a downpour.

GEORGIANA. I don't care what they expect—they won't see me. Fancy meeting those odious Montgomery girls like this—and Sylvia Munday who always looks as if she had stepped straight out of a bandbox. It would take all the pluck out of me. When I know I look a worm, I feel a worm.

MRS. MACARTNEY. You're too ridiculous for words.

GEORGIANA. It's no use arguing, Julia. You may as well go. If I have to come back to-morrow, I'll come; but I won't meet them all feeling like a second-hand scarecrow. My mind's quite made up; I'm going to Frances to-night. I've got my ticket and I've wired her to expect me.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Georgie——

(Enter DOBBINS carrying a bag and rug which he places on the table.)

GEORGIANA. You're not going to wrangle in front of the porter, are you? . . . Is the up train signalled yet?

DOBBINS. Not yet, miss, but she's just on due.

(Goes to door, halts and seems about to speak, then changes his mind and exits.)

MRS. MACARTNEY. Georgie, do listen to reason. . . .

GEORGIANA (pointing to luggage on table). Some one else will be coming in directly. This is a public waiting-room, you know, and the railway company haven't reserved it for us to squabble in.

MRS. MACARTNEY (shrugs her shoulders). Oh, very well. (Sarcastically.) I shall tell Lady Catherine that she may expect you back shortly. (Goes to door.)

GEORGIANA. You can tell her what you please.

MRS. MACARTNEY. Does that mean that you would like me to offer my apology——

GEORGIANA. No, it doesn't. Good-night.

(Exit MRS. MACARTNEY.)

(GEORGIANA sits motionless for a moment or two and then, as if she heard some one approaching, snatches up a newspaper from the table and holds it in front of her face, pretending to read.)

(Enter ADAM LANKESTER. He comes down towards the fire, glances at GEORGIANA at first without interest, and then suddenly stops and makes a half step so as to see round the paper which hides her face—starts and gives a smothered exclamation.)

GEORGIANA (looks up surprised). Oh!

ADAM. I beg your pardon—I had no idea——
(Turns towards door.)

GEORGIANA (recovering herself). Oh, please don't let me turn you out—into the wet.

ADAM. Thank you—not at all. I don't mind the wet and my train is just due.

GEORGIANA (*as he opens door*). Ad. . . . Mr. Lankester—

ADAM. What?

GEORGIANA (*feeling in her pocket*). Yes. . . . I've got something—if you wait a minute—something here that belongs to you.

ADAM. That belongs to me?

GEORGIANA (*without looking at him, and holding out her hand containing the ring and necklace*). These . . . I may as well give them to you now.

(ADAM *stands silent for a moment, then comes down, takes them from her outstretched hand and slips them into his pocket.*)

ADAM (*curtly*). Thanks.

(*He turns to go again, reaches door, stops irresolutely and looks at her.*)

I hope I am not impertinent in asking why you are here?

GEORGIANA. Oh no! I'm waiting for the London train.

ADAM. You're going to London to-night?

GEORGIANA. Yes. . . . I've had an—unpleasantness with Aunt Catherine.

ADAM. An unpleasantness?

GEORGIANA. You wouldn't be very far out if you called it a row.

ADAM. Not about—

GEORGIANA. Oh yes, it was about you, of course.

ADAM. I'm sorry.

GEORGIANA. I've made the place too hot to hold me.

ADAM. You don't mean to say they've sent you away—turned you out?

GEORGIANA. Oh dear no—I turned myself out—I couldn't stand 'em. . . . I'm going up to Frances

Melliship. She's the only person who'll be kind about it—except you.

ADAM. I'm very sorry.

GEORGIANA. So am I. (*She turns her head away suddenly and wipes her eyes.*) I think I must have got a cold—my feet got damp—coming here.

ADAM. But surely you haven't quarrelled with your people for good? (*He sits in the chair at fire—his back to the audience.*)

GEORGIANA. No, I don't suppose I have—in fact, I'm sure I haven't.

ADAM. I'm glad of that.

GEORGIANA. I can't possibly afford to quarrel with them for good. Whether I like it or not, I shall have to make it up and go back to them.

ADAM. You don't want to go back, then?

GEORGIANA. It's not particularly agreeable to have to grovel to your disappointed relatives, even if every one was—nice about it.

ADAM. And they won't be nice?

(*GEORGIANA laughs shortly. ADAM goes to the table.*)

Damn—I beg your pardon.

GEORGIANA. You needn't. That's just how I feel.

ADAM (*coming to her*). If there was only anything that I could do—

GEORGIANA. There isn't—except leave off being kind to me.

ADAM (*gently*). Poor little girl!

GEORGIANA (*stomping half crying*). Don't, I tell you.

ADAM. I'm sorry.

GEORGIANA. No, it's I who ought to be sorry. I didn't mean to be rude, but it has been such a—trying day for me.

ADAM. Yes.

GEORGIANA. And on the top of all I walked five miles to the station in the dark. I had no umbrella and it simply poured most of the way—I get

wet through and all over mud. I know I'm a perfect fright; now you see what I can look like at my very worst, I expect you're thanking your stars for your merciful escape.

ADAM (*huskily*). Georgie, this is the last time I shall ever see you. Don't talk like that.

GEORGIANA (*her voice trembling*). You are a good fellow—oh, you are. . . . I've quite made up my mind about one thing.

ADAM. What's that?

GEORGIANA. The next time I feel tempted to do right I shall resist the temptation.

ADAM. What do you mean?

GEORGIANA. Well, I've done the right thing to-day and look at the result. I'm miserable, you're miserable and Aunt Catherine's tearing her hair. That sort of thing's not very encouraging, is it? It doesn't exactly tempt you along the path of virtue. . . . It will be better for you in the end of course—much better. Do you ever dread the future?

ADAM. Yes, I do. . . . Georgie, there's something I want to say to you.

GEORGIANA. Yes?

ADAM. You won't let me be anything else—but you can't help my being your friend.

GEORGIANA (*in a low voice*). I don't want to help it.

ADAM. Then if I speak to you as your friend, you won't be offended.

GEORGIANA. I'm sure I shan't.

ADAM. You've made me understand to-day what it means to be entirely dependent on other people.

GEORGIANA. Have I?

ADAM. I've never understood before. . . . It was because you were dependent on other people that you—engaged yourself to me; and for the same reason you tell me you have got to go back to a life you dislike and relatives who don't want you. . . .

Georgie, what I want to tell you is—if you were a man and my friend I should say to you—"I have more than I want—let me help you a little."

GEORGIANA. You mustn't say it to me.

ADAM. Not—when——

GEORGIANA. No, it's impossible. We're not supposed to let a man help us—like that—however badly we want the help, unless we pay the proper price for it.

ADAM. Georgie——

GEORGIANA. Thank you, thank you ever so much for thinking of it. It was like you to think of it. But I can't.

ADAM (*slowly*). Then there is nothing I can do to make your life a little happier . . . nothing I can do to make you dread the future a little less. . . . My little girl, I'd give the whole world if there was.

(GEORGIANA *sits with her head bent, silent. ADAM turns and goes slowly towards the door.*)

GEORGIANA (*suddenly*). Wait—oh, please wait a moment.

ADAM. Yes?

GEORGIANA. I want to say something to you.

ADAM. Yes.

(*as she hesitates.*)

I'm listening.

GEORGIANA. It's something very difficult.

ADAM (*going nearer to her—right over to her*). I want to hear it—whatever it is.

GEORGIANA. Do you mind standing a little further off—(*motioning him behind her*)—somewhere about there.

ADAM. Is that right?

GEORGIANA. Yes, I think so.

ADAM. Well?

GEORGIANA. No, I can't. You'd better go.

ADAM. Please.

GEORGIANA (*hesitates, then in a low voice*). There is something you can do—to make me happier. (*She then faces him.*)

ADAM. There is. What is it?

GEORGIANA. You can marry me—as long as it's not out of pity.

ADAM. Georgie—Georgie—what are you saying?

GEORGIANA. I'm asking to be your wife—if you'll have me. Oh, of course you're horrified. I know what you must think of me. It's awful, it's impossible, it's brazen, it's unwomanly, but you'll never ask me again, so I must ask you—because I care. . . .

ADAM. You care?

GEORGIANA. You can refuse me—you will refuse me of course—but I want you to know first that I have got to care for you. I ought to be ashamed of saying it—but I'm not. You're good enough for any woman to love. I don't know how it was that I didn't find it out before—it was because I was so ashamed of myself, I think—and I thought what I felt for you was nothing but pity. . . . It wasn't till you'd gone that I began to understand what it would be to miss you—always to miss you—and not to see you again—ever—and . . . that's all. Now you can say no. Don't mind hurting my feelings . . . they deserve to be hurt.

ADAM (*going to her*). Georgie!

GEORGIANA. No, no, you mustn't. You're only sorry for me. You must think it over.

ADAM. I don't want to. Why in Heaven's name should I waste time in thinking it over. I care for you and you've told me you care for me.

GEORGIANA. But I told you so before.

ADAM. This time it's the truth.

GEORGIANA. I believe it is—I do believe it is . . . Do you really think you can love me now you know what a fearful liar I am?

ADAM. Goose!

GEORGIANA. If you should change your mind——

ADAM. I shan't!

GEORGIANA. But if, by any chance, you should, you promise to tell me and throw me over—just as I did you.

ADAM. Oh certainly, I'll promise that.

GEORGIANA. And you don't think it awful of me to have asked you?

ADAM. I think it was very brave of you.

GEORGIANA. Oh yes, it was brave.

(Signal bell rings off.)

ADAM. There's the train coming. What are you going to do?

GEORGIANA. Oh, I shall go to Frances all the same. I couldn't stand explanations.

ADAM. Then we can be married in London?

GEORGIANA. If you like.

ADAM. I do like.

GEORGIANA. Without any fuss?

ADAM. Without any fuss at all. We'll send Lady Catherine a wire from Paris.

GEORGIANA. What will they say?

ADAM. Who cares? Where's your coat?

GEORGIANA. There.

ADAM. You can't wear that—it's drenched.
(Takes rug from table.) Here—this will keep you warm. *(Wraps it round her tenderly.)*

GEORGIANA *(half laughing and half crying)*. I wonder you're not ashamed to be seen with such an object.

ADAM. Do you think I only want to see my little girl when she's rigged out in her best?

GEORGIANA. I don't believe you'd have said that if you were just taking me out of pity.

ADAM *(putting his arms round her)*. If I ever hear you say such a thing again—

(The rattle of an approaching train is heard. Enter

DOBBINS—*they move quickly apart. DOBBINS looks at them curiously, obviously puzzled.*)

DOBBINS (*going to table and picking up luggage*). Here she comes, sir. She's a bit late.

ADAM (*confusedly*). Late? Oh, that doesn't matter at all. Thanks—not at all.

DOBBINS. And your parcel, miss?

GEORGIANA. Oh, that doesn't matter either. Come along, Adam.

(ADAM takes her arm, and as they go out on to the flat form the curtain falls.)

PROPERTY PLOT

ACT I.

Music, lamps, sconces, candlesticks, and as many bibelots and works of art as you like, it being an old family mansion of many generations.

Tray and coffee service. Hot coffee.

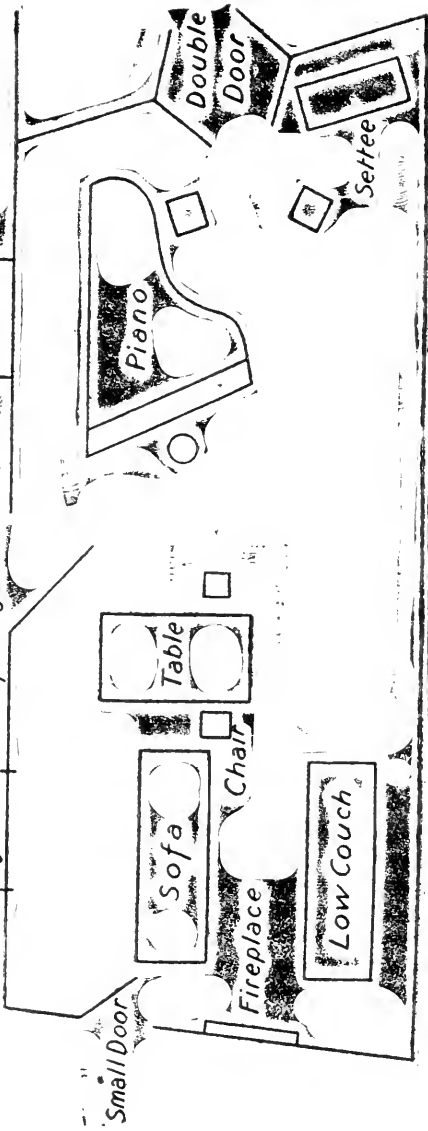
Mackintosh or man's coat from hall.

Act I. The Drawing Room

Terrace or Garden

Long Window
Bay Window

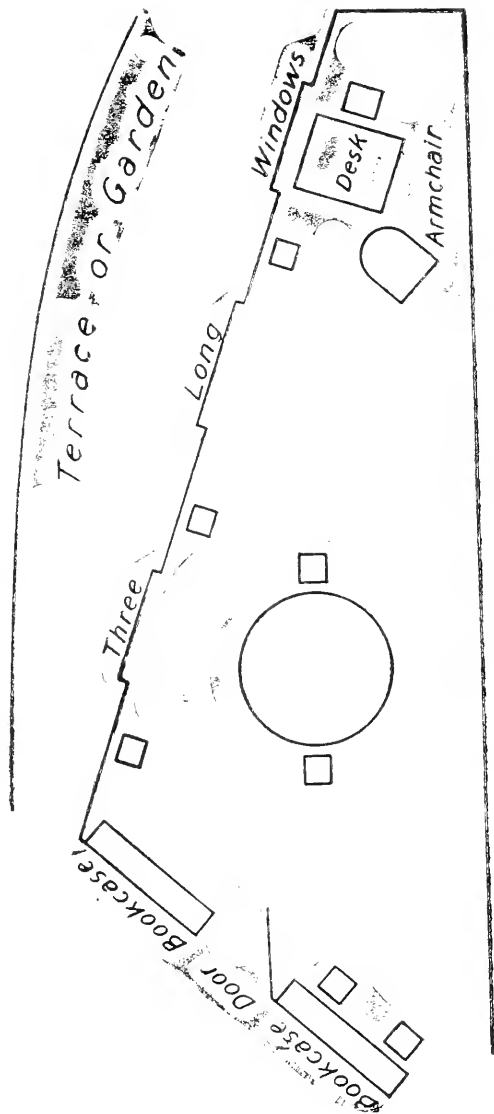
Long Window
opening on terrace



ACT II.

"Going-away" cloak and hat in dressmaker's cardboard box and milliner's box. All the usual writing-table implements, books, papers, periodicals usually found in country house library—paper basket.

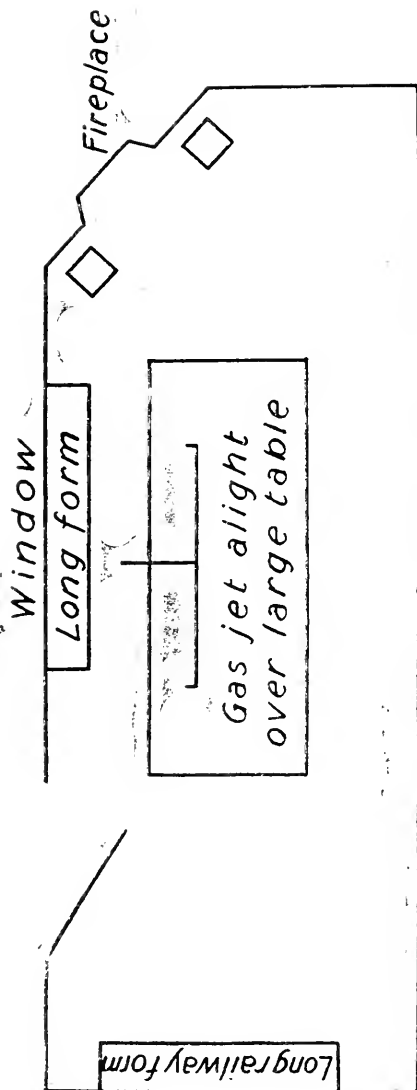
Act 2. *The Library*



ACT III.

Railway benches and table of light varnished wood as found in English railway stations. Texts and time table round the walls. Gas jet in form of old-fashioned tee alight with wire globes. Some male luggage.

Act 3
A Railway Station



Back velvet background produces platform in total darkness like a country Railway Station.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 676 149 5